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Historical Records
of the
9th Battalion
NORTHUMBERLAND
FUSILIERS





Annotations



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COMMERCE TO COMMEMORATE THE SERVICES OF

A. H. Merton

C - S

WITH "B" COMPANY of the 9th (SERVICE) BATTALION
NORTHUMBERLAND FUSILIERS.

1914-1918

HISTORIES OF THE NORTHUMBERLAND FUSILIERS

HON. GENERAL EDITOR : ALFRED BREWIS.

VOL. I. 9TH SERVICE BATTALION.

Captain C. H. COOKE, M.C.

VOL. II. 16TH SERVICE BATTALION.

Captain C. H. COOKE, M.C.

VOL. III. 18TH SERVICE BATTALION : PIONEERS.

Lieut.-Col. J. SHAKESPEAR, C.M.G., C.I.E., D.S.O.

VOL. IV. 19TH SERVICE BATTALION : PIONEERS.

Captain C. H. COOKE, M.C.

**HISTORICAL RECORDS
OF THE 9th (SERVICE) BATTALION
NORTHUMBERLAND FUSILIERS**

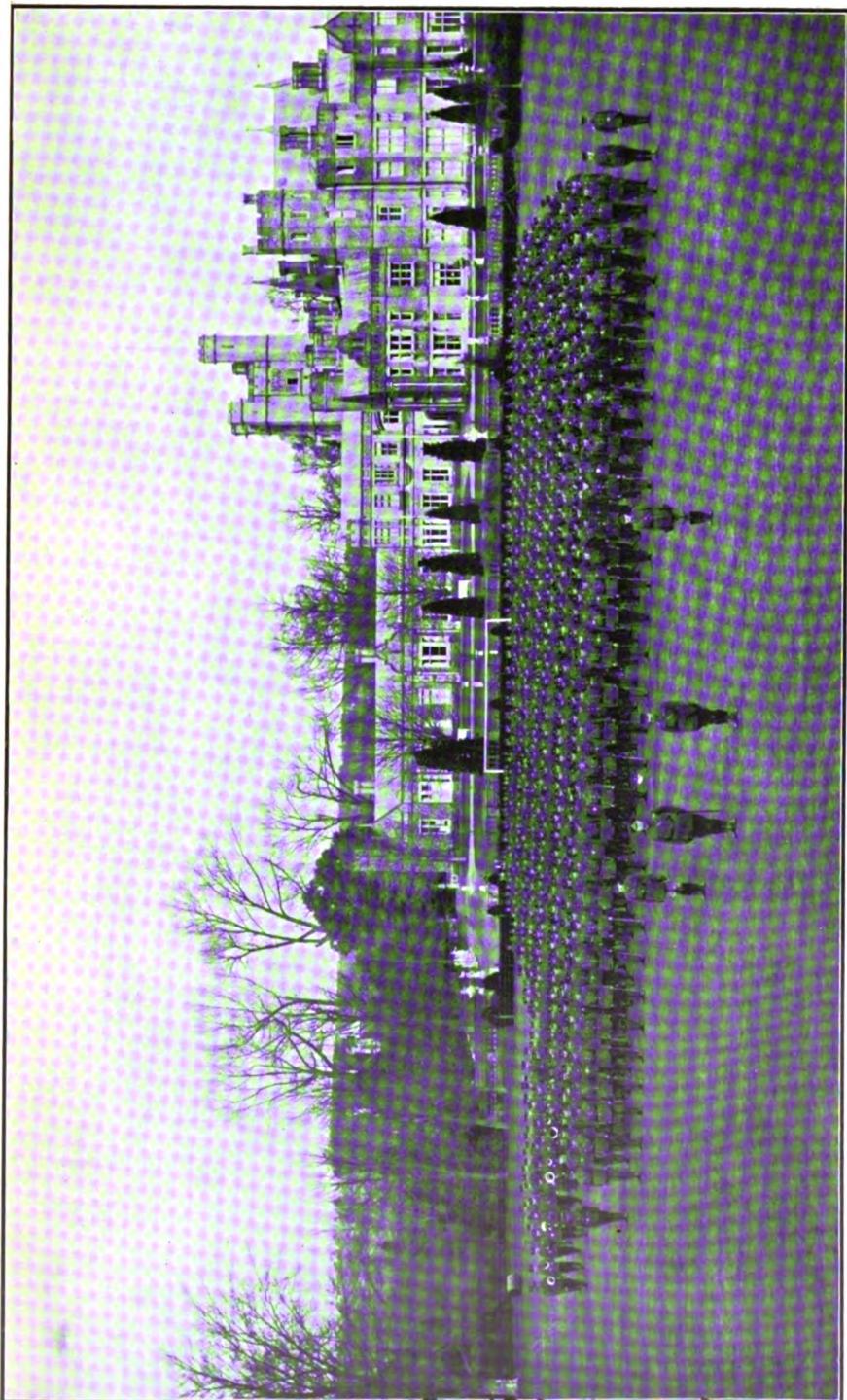


Photo by Hazel's Studios, Bournemouth.]

PARADE AT CANFORD MANOR.

[Frontispiece,

HISTORICAL RECORDS

of the

9th (Service) Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers

By

Captain C. H. Cooke, M.C.

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castle-upon-Tyne * * * 1928

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TO
OUR COMRADES
WHO FELL IN THE GREAT WAR
1914 1918

Their Name
Liveth forevermore

Drawn by]

[Lieut. A. K. Lawrence (19th Battalion).]

We welcome back our bravest and our best!—
Ah me! not all! some come not with the rest,
Who went forth brave and bright as any here!
In these brave ranks I only see the gaps,
Thinking of our dear ones whom the dumb turf wraps,
Dark to the triumph which they died to gain:
Fitlier may others greet the living,
For me the past is unforgiving;
I with uncovered head
Salute the sacred dead,
Who went, and who return not. Say not so!
'Tis not the grapes of Canaan that repay,
But the high faith that failed not by the way;
Virtue treads paths that end not in the grave;
No bar of endless night exiles the brave;
And to the saner mind
We rather seem the dead that stayed behind.
Blow, trumpets, all your exultations blow!
For never shall their aureoled presence lack:
I see them muster in a gleaming row,
With ever-youthful brows that nobler show;
We find in our dull road their shining track;
In every nobler mood
We feel the orient of their spirit glow,
Part of our life's unalterable good
Of all our saintlier aspiration;
They come transfigured back,
Secure from change in their high-hearted ways,
Beautiful evermore, and with the rays
Of morn on their white Shields of Expectation!

RUSSELL LOWELL.

PREFACE

THIS story, which should have been the first published of the "Quaysider" series of four volumes, is destined to be the last. Peculiar circumstances have made this inevitable, but it is hoped that justice, if belated, has been done to the prowess of a fine battalion, and especially to the honoured "B" Company.

Though the title indicates the scope of the volume, it must be remembered that this story is primarily of "B" Company, the first Quayside volunteers. It has not been possible to include in the nominal roll any but the members of that select company of good fellows. After this lapse of years changes have occurred, but space is left for further particulars to be added by those who care to do so. Every effort has been made to make the records accurate: many difficulties have arisen, and only the devoted work of Mr. Alfred Brewis has made these lists possible. The thanks of all "Commercials" are due to Mr. Brewis for his tireless efforts on their behalf.

For the information contained in the actual story I am indebted to Lieutenant-Colonel W. A. Vignoles, D.S.O., Lieutenant R. Woods, Quartermaster-Sergeant A. Bailes, and Corporal J. Muitt. Quartermaster-Sergeant Bailes began the story, and from his narrative, supplemented by diaries which bear no names, the early part of the story was worked up. The full account of the 1918 battles on the Somme and the Lys is compiled from the splendid notes and maps of Colonel Vignoles. Corporal Muitt, from another angle, supplemented the narrative, and I am indebted to Lieutenant-Colonel E. L. Thomson, D.S.O., for a diary of the events leading up to Armistice and demobilization. Captain G. M. L. Logie, Captain E. Giles Bates, M.C., and Lieutenant R. Woods, assisted by some old comrades-in-arms, read the manuscript—"B" Company toughness again!—and suggested further points. To these willing helpers I tender my grateful thanks. Without their aid the story would not have been written. To the many who offered help, and failed to produce anything tangible, I tender my

sympathies; they may have been unable to understand whence had come those little slips of paper! Perhaps this will remind them!

Illustrations are acknowledged, but some bear neither the name of the owner nor of the photographer. I wish to thank again Lieutenant A. K. Lawrence of our 19th Battalion for his Dedication, and for the sketch of "The Fusilier"; also the editor of the *St. George's Gazette* for permission to use quotations from the notes originally written by Captain E. Giles Bates, M.C.

This book, then, completes the series of four dealing with the "Commercial" battalions, and the thanks of all who served in these units have been well earned by the Military Committee of the Newcastle and Gateshead Incorporated Chamber of Commerce. Much hard work has been done unostentatiously by this Committee, both during and after the war. Of the Committee, those members most closely associated with the publication of the books have been Colonel W. H. Ritson, C.M.G., V.D., Colonel R. Stephenson, C.B.E., D.S.O., and Messrs. Harry Anderson and Alfred Brewis. Their kindly encouragement has been invaluable.

C. H. COOKE.

ROTHBURY,
NORTHUMBERLAND,
29th January, 1927.

FOREWORD

By BRIGADIER-GENERAL H. CONYERS SURTEES, C.B., C.M.G.,
D.S.O., M.V.O., D.L., J.P.

THIS account of the services in the Great War of a very fine battalion has been written with scrupulous attention to detail and care to avoid all exaggeration.

Throughout the five years of its existence, the 9th Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers proved itself a unit of which the old Fifth might indeed be proud. Just as I—their first Brigadier and an old Guards officer—was proud when, on the first day it went into the trenches, some officers of the regular line battalion which was being relieved remarked, referring to the manner in which the relief was conducted, “We thought it was the Guards who were taking over.”

Undaunted by hardship and decimation, this battalion endured the terrible experience of the Battle of the Somme, when many young lives were given for England at the Quadrangle Redoubt, and at Delville Wood. The misery and discomfort of the operations around Arras affected not its spirit. All who read the account of its share in the defence of the trenches at Villeret and afterwards in the Ypres Salient must admire the bravery and tenacity exhibited by this grand battalion.

The terrific nature of the fighting against enormous odds in the Sensée Valley makes us wonder at and respect the stubborn resistance put up, while yet we regret the losses then sustained. In April, 1918, throughout the critical struggle about Neuve Eglise, the 9th Northumberland Fusiliers again bore the brunt

Foreword

of the attack and nobly earned the encomiums and congratulations of Army, Corps, and Divisional Commanders. And in the final and victorious advance the battalion proved that it had preserved throughout the long and weary years its old dash and vim.

Since that time a decade has now passed, but in thinking of those that are gone we feel, "They will not grow old, as we that are left grow old. Age shall not wither nor the years condemn; but in the morning and at noontide and in the evening, we shall remember them."

H. CONYERS SURTEES, *Brigadier-General.*

APPRECIATION

BY BRIGADIER-GENERAL J. C. CHAPLIN, D.S.O.

THE fighting of the 9th Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers in the Great War is well worthy of a permanent record.

The battalion served under my command from November, 1917, till May, 1918. In resisting the German attacks in March and April, 1918, they were put to the highest test, and proved themselves to be troops of the finest quality.

The 9th Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers were fortunate in having such a fine soldier as Lieutenant-Colonel W. A. Vignoles, D.S.O., to command them, and officers and men were worthy of their leader, displaying the best qualities of British troops—eagerness to meet the enemy, endurance and cheerfulness under the great hardships.

J. C. CHAPLIN, *Brigadier-General,*
Commanding 103rd Infantry Brigade

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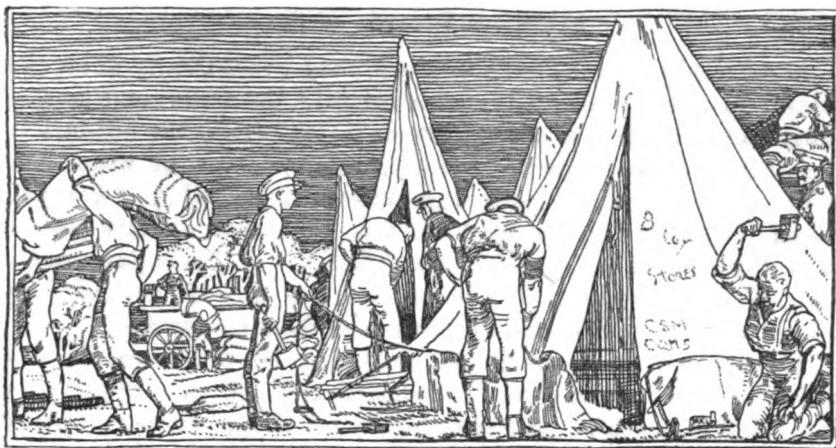
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Just a Company of penmen—
Soldiers then, of little worth;
But we set the ball a-rolling
In the hard and fighting North.

—*Company Song.*

HISTORICAL RECORDS OF THE NINTH (SERVICE) BATTALION NORTHUMBERLAND FUSILIERS

CHAPTER I

BOVINGTON: SEPTEMBER 1914—DECEMBER 1914

EVENTS of July and August, 1914, reacted strongly on "the lads of moor and Tyne." They were eager to join the fray. Sanction of the War Office was sought by the Newcastle and Gateshead Chamber of Commerce to raise a local battalion. Delays occurred, and enthusiasm waxed. Finally, a notice was posted on 'Change that a meeting would be held on the morning of the 28th August, when Mr. Herbert Shaw would give the latest news from the War Office. This he did, and announced to the eager audience that permission had been granted to raise a company of 250 men. A burst of applause followed this statement, applause not unmixed with irony. For had not many men enrolled some time before, and grumbled at the delay? The War Office had stirred!

Men who desired to join the new unit were to report at the Newcastle Grammar School on the Friday morning and there enlist. They did, and were ordered to "fall-in on the marker." This was not uniformly executed: some had their hands pocketed; some hid

them carelessly behind; some let them hang nonchalantly down the sides. In general the attitudes varied with the attire, and as this ranged from bowlers to straws, tweeds to plus-fours, the fall-in left something to be desired. Finally, after a wait of about ten minutes, a uniformed personage arrived and called "Parade! 'Shun!" Some did, but most did not. This man of voice proved to be the Sergeant-Major (but not "Stiffy" of Bovington fame), and, after reporting "all present," the men were divided into squads, and thus began their careers as soldiers-on-parade.

Great fun it was undoubtedly. During the afternoon the fun was continued. Names were called, and men fell out for purposes of medical examination and swearing-in. "Three years or duration of the war," a phrase then, became a joke later, and a choice piece of irony still later. And there are still some who ask if anyone ever got the "King's shilling"?

The week-end intervened, and friends were duly impressed by the oft-recounted experiences. Monday, the 6th September, dawned, and parade began as usual. About 11 a.m. the men were summoned to hear the important news from Colonel Ritson. Again the War Office had stirred, and the Quayside Company was ordered to proceed to Dorset as part of the 9th Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers. This meant hustling, for the men were to entrain that afternoon. There was not much time for packing or for saying farewells, but a welcome breather was given as the time of departure was moved to 9 p.m.

A notice appeared in the *Evening Chronicle* stating that the Quaysiders would march from the Grammar School via North Road, Northumberland Street, Grainger Street to the Central Station. The parade moved off to the sound of the drums; the recruits carried themselves proudly, and were then overwhelmed. "Sisters" were plentiful; the good people of Tyneside packed the route, and what was meant to be a swinging march was transformed into a cuddly crawl. It was a most enthusiastic send-off: memory of it lightened many a later burden; recollection still brings a happy smile.

Bovington Camp, Wool, Dorset, was the destination: it proved to be about fifteen hours distant, and was not much like a camp. Little preparation had been made, and the sky was the extra blanket for the first night. Afterwards tents arrived, and men were packed very thoroughly into them. On the 10th September rain was reported; and "we are fed like lions at the Zoo," said one of the company, deplored the lack of incidentals like knives, forks, spoons and plates.

The 9th Battalion was the senior of the 52nd Brigade, the other units being the 12th Manchester Regiment, 10th Lancashire Fusiliers and the 9th Duke of Wellingtons. The 52nd Brigade was part of the 17th Division. During the afternoon of 9th September, tents were obtained, but only sufficient for the half of the battalion. The others again slept under the sky; and the night being very wet, the sick list was heavy during the following days. The weather continued bad, and parades were few; equipment, too, had not arrived.

When the conditions improved, drill was attempted under great difficulties. There was a shortage of officers and non-commissioned officers. Rationing improved, following the advent, on the 12th September, of Lieutenant and Quartermaster A. E. Read. Six days later, Captain Viscount Howick¹ (retired list, 1st Life Guards) joined as temporary Commanding Officer, with Lieutenant J. F. Chenevix-Trench (2nd Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers) as Adjutant. Training became more definite and the battalion was working six to eight hours daily.

On the 20th September five hundred suits of service dress were issued between "A," "C," and "D" Companies; this uniform was in a threadbare condition, and scrappy. Two days later the battalion, under the command of Lord Howick, marched to Mupe Bay, and returned during the afternoon, thus covering a distance of eighteen miles. During the next few days the following officers joined for duty: Second-Lieutenants E. M. Jackson, R. V. L. Dallas, H. W. R. Haselhurst, R. B. Garrard, J. S. Allen, A. D. Haslam, and G. E. M. Gray. Captain G. P. Westmacott rejoined. These were followed by Second-Lieutenants A. M. Little, P. H. Sharp, and D. W. Hutchison.

An event on the 1st October gave cause for much merriment. "A" and "B" Companies marched to Wool Station to draw five hundred D.P. rifles. As these were a mixture of Lee-Enfields and Lee-Metfords dating from 1890, their condition can readily be imagined. However, it was the first consignment of equipment. Another step forward had been taken, and the stream of sarcasm could not entirely hide the pride of possession of arms.

Kitbags arrived next, containing the usual collection of razors, etc., of doubtful utility; in addition each man got three shirts, three pairs of socks and two pairs of thick pants. No boots had arrived, and many men of the battalion were in sore need. Lack of these necessities did not hinder route marches, for on the 3rd October the battalion, under Captain Viscount Howick, marched

¹ Now Earl Grey.

to Lulworth Castle for skirmishing exercises. More D.P. rifles arrived, and the whole battalion could practise rifle drill.

On the 6th October Lieutenant-Colonel H. St. G. Thomas, who was to command the 9th Battalion, arrived, but left later in the day to get together some equipment.

Training developed as personnel became available. The Gymnastic Instructor, Sergeant Milner, inaugurated a new course on the 8th October, and it is merely a coincidence that two days later twenty-five men of the battalion were discharged for various reasons. Another development about this period was the formation of the band. It began with three cornets, but, thanks to the activities of the Chaplain, the band soon grew, and gave a promising display during a route march on the 13th October. The following day Officers' Mess was inaugurated. In brief, the battalion was settling into shape.

Other officers joined for duty during the month: Captain J. C. Adam (8th), Second-Lieutenant P. D. Robinson (13th), Lieutenant Sir A. Dean-Paul, Bart. (19th), Captain C. B. L. Dashwood (late of the 5th), Captain J. S. Fawcett (19th), and Major J. H. Reynolds (26th).

Games were organized, and a Rugger match was played. Promising form was shown, and it was hoped to arrange matches with other units.

Training continued, and had long since passed the stage of "fun." A run of a couple of miles before breakfast has little humour in it; even squad drill, in large doses, is apt to pall on the most enthusiastic. Variations there were, as when "B" Company went for a week-end camp to Wimborne and, on returning, were supposed to be captured by "A" Company. Lord Howick, however, by taking a circuitous route, got his "convoy" safely to camp, and so outwitted "A" Company. Skirmishing, "which means rushing over moors and bogs and falling flat on your face at given signals," provided another variation, and did not Officer Commanding "B" Company read Hilaire Belloc's articles to the troops? From the same source of information we learn that the Brigadier "comes and looks at us now and then—a pleasant old soul." By contrast "it is pouring in torrents, parade ground is in floods—our tent is not particularly comfortable, fifteen men, fifteen kitbags, thirty blankets, fifteen great-coats—men coming in and out in large wet boots, but all keep cheerful, talking and singing."

Now, a word about the cooks. Letters home, if from a non-cook, sympathized with the cooks. If from a cook, the letters,



BEFORE UNIFORMS WERE ISSUED.



AND AFTER !

[Facing p. 4.]

unfortunately, are not quotable. Cooks had to get up at an unearthly hour, chop wet wood, and then try to get the fires going with it. If rain fell there was no shelter: usually no fire; another wash-out. The Sergeant-Cook struggled heroically and humorously. He won the hearts, at any rate, of the ever-hungry soldiers. Their letters home were tribute to his prowess against overwhelming misfortunes. And did not the oil-lamp once shed its contents over the tea-chest?¹

These sad lapses in the kitchens had an inevitable aftermath. Bournemouth yielded food and its accompaniments. Picket dodging to Bournemouth became a fine art. These are tales that have oft been told, and here it is enough to chronicle that such a game existed. Maybe the cooking staff in general, and some of the deputy-assistant cooks (on duty alphabetically), were most adept at it. There is a sad dearth of incidents to record at this period; that is, the participants will smile cheerfully over memories, but the events are not, apparently, for publication. Take the question of the all-disguising Burberry. How many times did men of "B" Company, garbed so over their Borstal suits, get out of difficult situations through being mistaken for officers? There was a party once in Bournemouth, the Sergeant-Cook being there. As they rolled campwards in an old growler—the cab doing the rolling, mark you—a sentry of another unit was blowing the Last Post. Picture the man intent on his blasting, and a growler running over his toes. The music ceased abruptly; the cab stopped; the sergeant of the guard appeared to meet the Burberry-clad men of "B" Company: the sergeant saluted.

"That's all right, sir, that's all right." And it was so!

Finally, this garment was forbidden to the rank and file. The fact was plainly stated in the Battalion Routine Orders, but the taboo had nothing to do, we are assured, with the Last Post incident. No, the real cause happened later. Did not the Regimental Sergeant-Major make an error and show a private to a good seat at a concert?

"Come this way, sir." During the concert—there may have been some slight tittering amongst the audience—the Regimental Sergeant-Major saw his mistake. The dread order followed, and many a good friend was packed regretfully home.

Brigade training, under Brigadier-General H. C. Surtees, C.B., M.V.O., D.S.O., began on the 13th November, but owing to the very bad weather the operations were abandoned, and, after a short route march, the 9th Battalion returned to the camp. Four

¹ See Appendix VI.

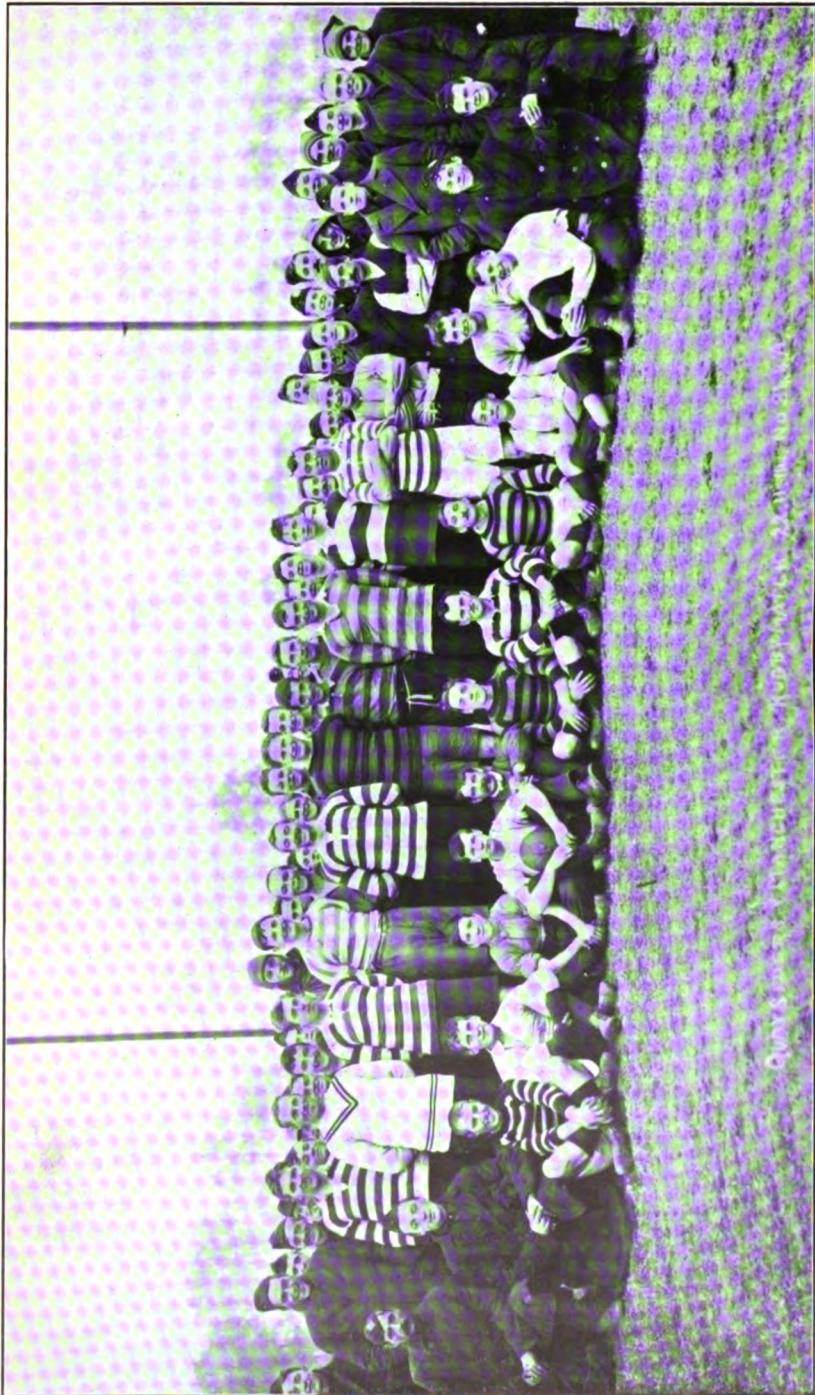
6 9th (Service) Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers

days later the scheme was carried out, the general idea being that the Brigade was to occupy the gap in the Purbeck Hills covering Wareham, the enemy having landed at Swanage. The total mileage was twenty-seven, and from the 9th Battalion only four men did not complete the distance on foot. Two of these had bad boots, and two should not have begun the march. It was an excellent performance, and the band proved invaluable. "Even the Manchesters could not laugh at us."

During October and November the following officers joined the battalion : Lieutenant O. E. Wreford-Brown, Second-Lieutenant A. J. B. Tanfield, Lieutenant H. B. Knott, Captain J. Leadbitter Knott, Second-Lieutenants V. H. Thornton, G. P. Sterling, and R. Maddison.

Camp conditions had not improved, and for some time rumours had been frequent that a move was contemplated. Rumour did not prove false, for on the 2nd December the battalion marched from Bovington Camp to Broadstone and Canford, into billets. Canford Manor was made Headquarters, and there parts of "A" Company and "B" Company were stationed, the rest of the battalion being in the vicinity of Broadstone. Before leaving Bovington the Commanding Officer had complimented the men on their fortitude during the months of bad weather.

A word of praise is due to the Y.M.C.A. personnel for their efforts during the strenuous and tempestuous months. On one occasion the tent was blown down, but the faithful workers strove against all adversity to help the soldiers. Concerts were arranged, and the Y.M.C.A. tent was always a haven of refuge. Later, a hut was erected, and the comfort increased.



CHAPTER II

WIMBORNE, BOVINGTON, AND HURSLEY: DECEMBER 1914—JULY 1915

COMPANY training became more intensive; and the *Gazette* was closely scanned by officers. The promotion season had set in. Captain Lord Howick had been promoted to Major and Lieutenant J. F. Chenevix-Trench to Captain. Following these, Second-Lieutenants Haselhurst and Allen gained another star, and Lieutenant Allen acted as Adjutant to the Broadstone detachment.

Transport was still in a nebulous state, the only mounted officers being the Commanding Officer and the Adjutant; but four more horses were added to the strength for the use of Major Lord Howick, Captains Dashwood and Westmacott and Lieutenant Read. Mercifully, the Medical Officer had postponed the practice of his arts until the men were comfortably housed. Vaccination began; inoculation followed. It is well to touch but lightly on these incidentals of a soldier's life.

More to the point was the announcement that six days furlough was to be granted to all ranks, the first batch of men to leave on December 15th. This raised the question of uniform. Was there a man who liked it? Blue-black, none too smart, with funny little caps that caused much satiric and strong language—this was not the garb to show to loving relatives. Private tailors did well in the sudden rush of the men to appear smart. Those who were not quick enough to be regarbed were certainly met with some rude comments on their return to Tyneside.

At this period the question of commissions grew acute. New battalions were being rapidly formed, and officers with even a slight training were needed for the nascent units. Worried temporary Commanding Officers cast longing eyes on "B" Company of the 9th, and tentative proposals were made. But Colonel Thomas did not wish to lose his men, and the order went forth that no one would be allowed to apply for a commission. This edict caused much heartburning, and led to a vast amount of quiet wangling. Many men managed to get away, and proved invaluable to the new battalions. The Colonel's loss was really the Army's gain.

Inspections happened. On the 12th December the Brigade was inspected by General Wizard of the War Office. He was satisfied with the progress made. During the afternoon of the same day, Lieutenant-General W. Pitcairn Campbell, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Southern Command, also reviewed the Brigade, and he too expressed satisfaction. The 9th was determined to uphold the honour of the "Fifth."

Two officers and two non-commissioned officers were sent to Hayling Island for a musketry course, and, having returned, began to instruct the battalion in the mysteries of rifle shooting. Practices on the miniature range were carried out by non-commissioned officers, and then these instructors, primed with knowledge, imparted their store of information to the eager troops. Coincident with this intensive training were the more leisurely Brigade Field Days, held once a week, for tactical purposes. In these schemes everyone, as is usual, was the victor.

Soldiers are not made in a day. Despite the general and praiseworthy strides towards efficiency, there were incidents that betrayed the amateur—or showed the irrepressible civilian clothed in uniform. One good fellow, on sentry, had his briar pipe going in full blast, a serious offence. But to this he added the heinous crime of presenting arms, pipe going strongly the while, to the Commanding Officer. He was suitably dealt with. Hair-length was another matter, the nicety of which was not always appreciated. A flick of a stick, a flying cap ("an inverted canoe" is one of the tamest expressions quotable), and a gruff voice, "If them 'airs was cut, them caps would fit!"—how many times did this scene occur? Then there was the incident of the private prancing about with a purloined carving-knife exclaiming he was a Gurkha. No Court of Inquiry was held on this affair, but the general opinion was that it was due to too close attention to the Bellocian prophecies and explanations occasionally read to the troops.

Wimborne was enlivened on Christmas Eve. A tour of the shops was made, and everything that could make a noise was purchased. Fancy hats were got, one man being content with a tea-cosy. In the square an impromptu concert was held, combined with a little dancing and much uproar. Even the inhabitants, who swore it was the best night since Jubilee Year, joined in the merriment. The men then paraded the streets, singing and playing popular airs. Two days later: "Wimborne is out of bounds to all troops."

After this there remained only Bournemouth, eight miles distant. Saturdays were spent there, and those who had not week-

end passes, or any pass at all, went straight to the Square and booked all the available taxis for the return at night. The last taxi to camp was usually a sight that amused the inhabitants, and occasionally disgruntled an officer party.

Many more officers had joined during the months of December and January. These were Second-Lieutenants L. R. Burrows (11.12.14), A. D. Carrick (13.12.14), C. D. Cowie (15.12.14), H. C. Kirsopp (29.12.14), A. H. Bartley (29.12.14), Hon. S. R. Vereker (9.1.15), K. S. Hall (9.1.15), W. F. Robertson (13.1.15), D. Robertson (13.1.15), R. E. M. Heanley (18.1.15), and A. E. Illingworth (23.1.15).

The command of the 17th Division was taken over by Major-General T. D. Pilcher, C.B., an old Fifth officer, and he inspected the 52nd Brigade on the 3rd February. Training continued and was more expansive. A week later, the Brigade took part in a scheme, the general idea being an advance on Blandford, which was held by part of the Royal Naval Division and Naval Brigade. These operations were watched by Major-General Pilcher and Staff Officers. Another variation provided was the digging of an entrenchment on Canford Heath, one company working at a time while the others were busy on the miniature ranges at Canford and Broadstone.

It was anticipated that the stay in billets would be short, but March found the battalion still enjoying life in the same places. The troops were very comfortable, and due tributes to the kindnesses received were paid to the temporary hosts and hostesses. Here the thanks are consolidated, and the good people of Canford, Broadstone, Wimborne and district may rest assured that their kind acts were appreciated to the full.

A smart piece of work by "B" Company was performed on the 3rd and 4th March. Under Second-Lieutenant P. D. Robinson the company marched twenty-five miles in excellent time, and there were no casualties. The following day, a Battalion Field Day was held, when about twenty miles were covered, including skirmishing. This example of endurance amply proved the condition of the company, and bore out the many tributes paid to it for its fitness and efficiency. Brigade Field Days were frequent, and differed no whit from all such days. Marching, counter-marching, artillery formation, extended order, halts, pauses, consultations, murmurings, hasty studies of maps, "What the deuce is happening next?" more marching, more consultations, re-forming, a march back to billets, arguments, all victors, and many inquiring the why and the wherefore. Nevertheless, it was sound training.

Divisional Field Days were on a par, though usually the pauses were longer, the queries more frequent, the arguments more vague and less conclusive. Still, everybody always won.

On St. Patrick's Day the officers of the battalion fired their revolver course. There were no casualties.

Four days later, the move from the comfortable billets began. No. 4 platoon proceeded to Bovington Camp, Wool, as advance party to "C" and "D" Companies. These companies moved on the 23rd March, under Major G. P. Westmacott, and began their musketry course. Three days later "B" Company and the three platoons of "A" moved to the camp, thus concentrating the battalion. Naturally enough, training did not proceed smoothly; there was a pronounced shortage of ammunition. Equipment of various kinds was arriving, however, and animals for the 1st Line Transport were duly signed for. Lieutenant O. H. Schuller, "C" Company, was appointed Transport Officer, and the 1st Line Transport underwent training with the 17th Divisional Train. To the initiated these moves were ominous; training was in a fairly advanced state when the War Office began issuing sundry goods.

The first Divisional Field Day was held on the 30th March, and it was the forerunner of many, including night operations. Any one of these provided incidents sufficient to fill a book; night operations, too, were conducive to elegant and eloquent verbiage. The imprint of a heavy army boot on one's face was really a matter of grave concern. Darkness covered such incidents, but could not dim the adequate linguistic counter-attacks.

Officers joining during February and March were: Second-Lieutenants G. D. Penty (5.2.15), G. P. Lefebvre (22.2.15), Captain A. A. Surtees (7.3.15), Second-Lieutenants P. H. Barfoot (12.3.15), A. R. Karpeles (12.3.15), S. P. Weston (13.3.15), and M. G. Patten (17.3.15). Promotions were as follows: Captain G. P. Westmacott to be Major, and Second-Lieutenants R. V. L. Dallas, E. M. Jackson, G. S. Terry, and R. B. Garrard to be Lieutenants.

One point has not yet been settled. When did the Regimental Sergeant-Major sleep? Where two or three of "B" Company are gathered together, the question is still debated. Regimental Sergeant-Major Poulter was housed near the quarter-guard, and all through the night he was ready to correct any short-comings on the part of the sentry. Did some belated soldier (officer or man) arrive and be challenged by the sentry, then the brisk tones of the Regimental Sergeant-Major intervened, "Let me hear that

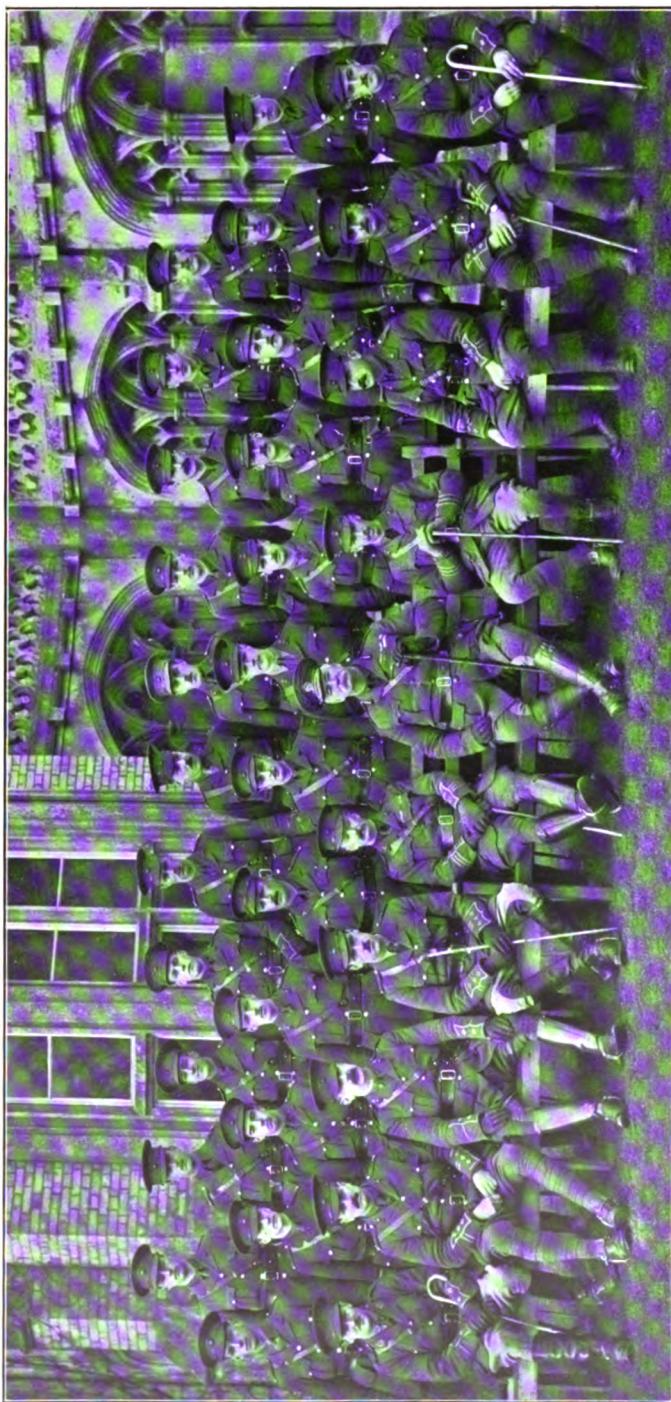


Photo by Hazel's Studios, Bournemouth.]

OFFICERS AT CANFORD MANOR.

[Facing p. 11.

OFFICIALS OF THE BUREAU.

KEY

OFFICERS OF THE BATTALION:

KEY.

BACK Row: Lieut. R. B. Garrard, Lieut. A. D. Haslam, 2nd Lieut. C. D. Cowie,
2nd Lieut. K. S. Hall, 2nd Lieut. R. Maddison, Captain G. S. Terry,
2nd Lieut. G. D. Petty, Lieut. J. S. Allen, 2nd Lieut. R. E. M. Heanley,
2nd Lieut. L. R. Burrows, 2nd Lieut. A. E. Tilngworth.

MIDDLE Row: 2nd Lieut. G. P. Sterling, 2nd Lieut. A. J. B. Tanfield,
Lieut. G. E. M. Gray, 2nd Lieut. W. F. Robertson, Lieut. O. H. Schuller,
Captain H. B. Knott, 2nd Lieut. the Hon. S. R. Vereker, Lieut. P. D.
Robinson, Lieut. O. E. Wreford-Brown, Captain H. W. R. Haslehurst.

Lieut. R. V. L. Dallas, 2nd Lieut. H. C. Kirropp.

FRONT Row: Lieut. P. K. Murphy, R.A.M.C., Captain C. B. L. Dashwood,
Lieut. and Qr.-Mr. A. E. Read, Captain G. Thomas, Adjutant J. F. Chenevix-Trench,
M.V.O., D.S.O., Major Viscount Howick, Captain J. S. Fawcus, Captain
J. Leadbitter Knott, 2nd Lieut. D. Robertson.

'Advance One.' " Sentries took up their duties in trepidation. What fault would lead to that stentorian voice correcting them? But Regimental Sergeant-Major Poulter was not a mere voice. He was a man of action, and to him the 9th Battalion owed much. Regimental from tip to toe, he showed by precept and example what a soldier should be. If the irreverent Quaysiders christened him "Stiffy," yet he remains to them the embodiment of British soldiery. Their lasting affection for him is the greatest tribute a fellow-man could have: it is greater by far than a patchwork of well-earned ribbons.

During April the machine-gun section officers and non-commissioned officers began training under Captain Surtees, the Brigade Machine-gun Officer. Other developments were the battalion canteen, and a corporals' room. This latter was due to the unremitting perseverance of the Commanding Officer. Further progress was reported by the band, and at two concerts the players gave a good account of themselves.

Guard-mounting provoked keen rivalry. One night with "B" Company on duty, the Commanding Officer, Adjutant, and Regimental Sergeant-Major carried out the inspection, many officers and men being interested spectators. The Commanding Officer went round several times, but so even were the men that it was very difficult to choose the stick man. Oil bottles were examined; then the pull-throughs. Still the men were even on points. A Solomon-like judgment was then made—the man with the longest moustache was selected for the stick!

To men of the 5th, St. George's Day, the 23rd April, is *the day of the year*. It was, indeed, unfortunate that on this the first anniversary to be celebrated by the 9th Battalion, a Divisional Field Day had been ordered. Thus the customary Parade could not be held. However, at night there was a Sergeants' Mess Smoker, attended by Brigadier-General Surtees, C.B., M.V.O., D.S.O., the Brigade-Major, Staff Captain, Commanding Officer, and other officers of the battalion. It was an enjoyable event, and the Brigadier in a brief speech was very complimentary to the battalion. During the day the roses worn by officers and men caused much comment and envy amongst the other Service Battalions in the Brigade.

The following day the battalion was inspected by Major-General Pilcher, C.B., and from his remarks it was gathered that the 9th was the "star turn" of the 52nd Brigade, if not of the 17th Division. The afternoon was devoted to sports, but owing to bad weather, the programme was not completed. The

following, culled from the *St. George's Gazette*, is a summary of the events:

100 yards.—1st, Private Bradbury, "D" Company; 2nd, Private Hunter, "B" Company.

Quarter-mile.—1st, Private Bradbury, "D" Company; 2nd, Private Mole, "B" Company.

1 mile.—1st, Private Ferguson, "B" Company; 2nd, Private R. S. Wilson, "C" Company.

Sergeants' Race.—1st, Sergeant Marshall, "B" Company; 2nd, Sergeant Coyne, "C" Company.

Obstacle Race.—1st, Private Sumby, "B" Company; 2nd, Private Gibson, "D" Company.

Band Race.—1st, Private Bradbury, "D" Company; 2nd, Private Robertson, "D" Company.

Marching Order Race.—1st, Private Bradbury, "D" Company; 2nd, Private E. J. Smith, "D" Company.

High Jump.—Private Scurr, "B" Company.

Long Jump.—Private Scurr, "B" Company.

Relay Race.—"D" Company team: Privates Bradbury, Muter, Smith, and Dunn.

Cross Country.—"B" Company team: Privates Murton, Burstall, Ferguson, Viner, Chill, Chapman, Scott, and Aubin.

Tug-of-War.—"C" Company team: Sergeant Henderson, Corporal Young, Lance-Corporal Everitt, Privates Stafford, Brown, Oliver, Morley, and Pooley.

Officers' Race.—1st, Second-Lieutenant Tanfield; 2nd, Second-Lieutenant Patten.

At this period the battalion Soccer team was playing well, and generally included Privates Donaldson, Fenwick, Spencer, Fawcett, Cockayne, Brown, Scott, Hardy, Wrightson, Lance-Corporal Walker, with Lieutenant J. S. Allen representing the officers. Against the 12th Manchesters, the team won 4—0; against the 7th Borders, won 5—1; against the 9th Duke of Wellingtons, won 5—0, and drew 0—0 with the 10th Sherwood Foresters. In the inter-company games "B" Company held its own, the team consisting of Private Wrightson (goal), Privates W. C. Grant and C. E. Hardy (backs); Private Mole, Second-Lieutenant Robinson, and Private Scott (half-backs); Privates Slater, Cross, Second-Lieutenant Burrows, Privates Smith and R. Donaldson (forwards).

Training continued, and on the 9th and 10th May an efficiency test, lasting thirty hours, was undergone. It began with a twelve-mile march, followed immediately by a practice attack;

the battalion then went into bivouacs, and at dusk took up an outpost line, from which an attack at night was carried out. At 8 a.m. next morning, the battalion was attacked and fought a rearguard action for about four miles, finally reaching camp with only a single casualty. The name of this soldier is unfortunately not recorded.

During the last week the battalion was at Bovington a trench scheme was executed. The Brigade occupied a line of trenches for three days and three nights, the 9th Battalion occupying the line for two days and nights. There was little to break the monotony excepting snipers with blank ammunition. In view of what was to follow in France it was useful training, including the monotony.

The stay at Bovington ended on the 27th May, for the battalion took part in the first Divisional march, a four-day affair. Notice was short, but on the first day the seventeen mile trek was to Wimborne, where the battalion took up an outpost line for the night. It was a shorter affair next day, only thirteen miles to Ringwood. The third night found the battalion in bivouacs in the New Forest, a delightful spot near Lindhurst. On the 30th May the battalion marched past Romsey to Hursley, near Winchester.

Specialist training was the order of the day in the new camp, a partially huttet place. The Machine-gun Section had gone to Wareham under Lieutenant E. M. Jackson and Second-Lieutenant A. H. Bartley. They did eventually get a gun to play with, though the machine-gun officer had manufactured a dummy of varying efficiency. However, they managed with the new gun to fire off about 5,000 rounds ere the party rejoined the battalion on the 10th June. Then there arrived two Lewis-guns, and at 6.30 a.m. daily the officers turned out for instruction in this wonderful little weapon.

A party under the Second-in-Command, Major H. Bryan, C.M.G., and Second-Lieutenant D. Robertson, stayed behind at Bovington for training as snipers. Then followed work in "platoon assaults," with grenade-throwing included. Trenches were dug in the chalk, the grenades were old jam-tins filled with soil, and some good throwing was witnessed. On the 24th June the battalion entrained at Winchester for Amesbury, and marched through the famous Larkhill Camp with its miles of hutments to lines near the ranges. Here the musketry was completed in a highly satisfactory way, the results comparing very favourably with those of units in four other Divisions.

14 9th (Service) Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers

Hardly had the troops returned to Hursley than orders were received for the move overseas. There was the usual rush to replenish kits, and Winchester rose to the occasion with a push that did credit to the cathedral town. The saddest part, however, was the cutting down to War Establishment, and the saying of good-bye to those detailed to remain with the Reserve Battalion. This parting with old friends had a peculiar sadness: some of the "details" left behind did eventually rejoin, but others were drafted to strange units.

The advance party, under Major G. P. Westmacott, left the battalion at 4 a.m. on the 14th July, and proceeded to Southampton, where they embarked for Le Havre. This party consisted of 3 officers, 108 men (including the Machine-gun Section) and transport with 66 animals. Next afternoon (15th July) at 3.15 p.m. the remainder of the battalion left Hursley Park for Winchester, and entrained by half battalions for Folkestone. At 9.10 p.m. the *Invicta* left the quay with its precious freight, and arrived at Boulogne about two hours later. Some day, perhaps, a poet will arise to sing the epic of the troop-ship.

The officers who went abroad with the 9th Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers were as follows:

Headquarters.—Lieutenant-Colonel H. St. G. Thomas, Major H. Bryan, C.M.G., Captain and Adjutant J. F. Chenevix-Trench, Lieutenant and Quartermaster A. E. Read, Lieutenant P. K. Murphy, R.A.M.C., Lieutenant E. M. Jackson, Second-Lieutenants W. F. Robertson and Hon. S. R. Vereker.

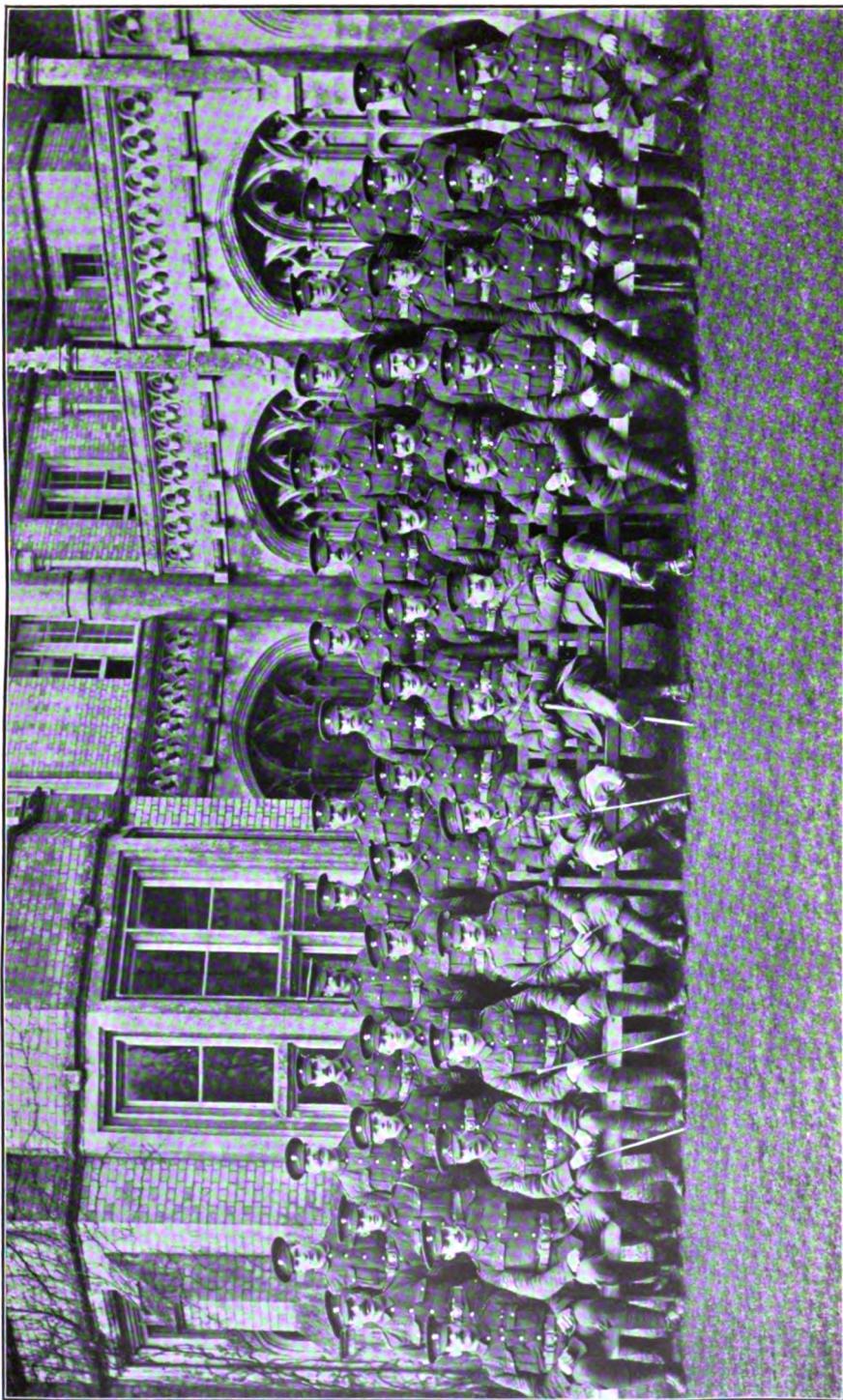
"A" Company.—Captains J. S. Fawcus and J. L. Knott, Lieutenant R. V. L. Dallas, Second-Lieutenants D. Robertson and A. E. Illingworth.

"B" Company.—Major Viscount Howick, Captain H. W. R. Haselhurst, Lieutenants O. E. Wreford-Brown and P. D. Robinson, Second-Lieutenants L. R. Burrows and G. P. Lefebvre.

"C" Company.—Captain C. B. L. Dashwood, Lieutenants G. S. Terry and R. B. Garrard, Second-Lieutenants A. J. B. Tanfield, V. H. Thornton, and M. G. Patten.

"D" Company.—Major Westmacott, Captain H. B. Knott, Lieutenant J. S. Allen, Lieutenant A. D. Haslam, Second-Lieutenant G. D. Penty.

It was a pity that the Rev. Pierce Butler, who had done so much for the troops at Bovington, could not accompany the battalion overseas.



CHAPTER III

ST. ELOI AND HILL 60: JULY 1915—DECEMBER 1915

It was very dark when the battalion disembarked at Boulogne about midnight, and the march began up that trying hill to St. Martin's Camp. Next evening, the march down was easier, and for the first time the troops saw the never-to-be-forgotten trucks, marked "40 Hommes ou 8 Chevaux." These were occupied, either by forty men or eight horses (the Havre party joining the battalion), and the slow journey to Arques began. The truckloads of men did their best to sleep.

At night, the 9th Battalion leading, the 52nd Infantry Brigade marched to Hazebrouck into billets, but pushed on again next day via Caestre to Godewaersvelde. The *pavé* roads were very trying, but despite the footsore condition of the men, they marched well. Two days were spent here, and the Brigade was inspected by General Sir Herbert Plumer, K.C.B., Commanding the Second Army. On the evening of the 21st July began that march to Ouderdom, rendered famous by a pathetic article published in the First Field Service Edition of *The Quaysider*, entitled "Nine miles—more or less."

"What does that mean? Ah! gentle readers at home, you don't understand. You were never at — on that memorable evening in July, 1915. You didn't then array yourself in the trappings of the modern warrior and carefully look to the loading of your piece—just in case. You didn't fall-in, cover off, form fours, right, with a bold full pace of thirty inches, heading towards the Monastery perched high on the distant hill, which was the background of one of those glorious landscapes typical of Northern France, and which lay on the route to the next halting place in the war zone. Again, patient one, you were not one of the columns that plodded along mile after mile as the hours dragged on, and the night gave place to early morn ere at last the lowly huts were reached—and rest. Had you been there, ah, then you would have understood 'Nine miles—more or less.'"

It was a circuitous route to the camp at Ouderdom, the length

being given officially as about sixteen miles. Here a rest was obtained, but on the 25th July a company went into the line for twenty-four hours for experience and tuition under our 1st Battalion. This was in "P" trenches, south of St. Eloi, about three miles south of Ypres, and, if the men had not symptoms of "wind-up," it was not the fault of the yarns told by the hardened fighters who acted as instructors! Supposititious snipers lurked in every tree; every spot was "marked"; every nook and cranny was dangerous. Really, it was remarkable that any of the 1st Battalion was alive "to tell the tale."

Our "C" Company had a very trying time, and had some casualties, 5 killed, 9 wounded, during their tour. "B" Company suffered no losses, but those who had the job of burying the dead, and rebuilding the parapets under fire, found it quite enough for a first experience in the line. On the 30th July, the 52nd Brigade was ordered to go into billets at the Château, one and a half miles north-east of Dickebusch, to form a reserve to the 14th Division, hard pressed at Hooge. The troops were in bivouacs in a field, surrounded by guns, and on the 1st August took over the sector previously held by the 1st Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers. The front of the 52nd Brigade extended from the Vierstraat-Poperinghe road to a point 250 yards south-west of St. Eloi. "B" Company was in reserve at Ridgewood, Headquarters being at Wiltshire Farm.

The sector was fairly quiet, but at 2.30 a.m. 9th August, the battalion "stood to" during the bombardment which preceded the successful assault by other troops at Hooge. It was a lengthy spell in the line, but on August 14th the battalion came into reserve at Ridgewood. Nightly trips to the line were made, the men staggering under the loads of Engineer stores. "Stand to" was in force, the men being knocked up an hour before dawn, wet or fine, cold or warm. There they stood for an hour in full kit; the hour over, the men were allowed to return to their shelters, and, if they felt like it, to have another sleep. They did feel like it.

On the 21st the battalion returned to the front line in the "M" and "N" trenches in the Vierstraat sector. Nothing exceptional happened, but the tour brought its measure of incidents. Trenches were improved, splinter-proof shelters built, and a ditch dug in front of the wire. It was not unusual for someone, in the digging, to uncover the body of a dead soldier, a grim reminder of the fighting that had been. During this tour, on the 31st August, the first Quaysider was killed, Private Jerry

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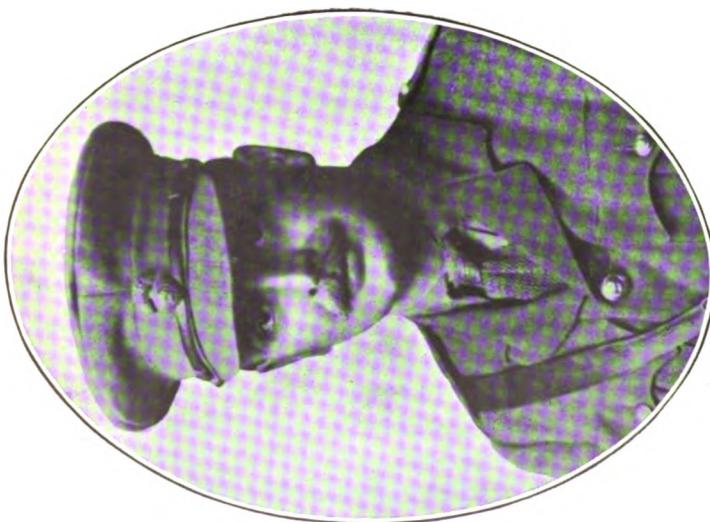
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[Facing p. 17.]

CAPTAIN H. B. KNOTT.
DIED FROM WOUNDS, 7-9-1915.



MAJOR J. LEADBITTER KNOTT, D.S.O.
KILLED IN ACTION WITH 10TH BATTN. THE WEST YORKS. REGT.,
1-7-1916.

Harrison while on duty with "C" Company being struck by a fragment of a grenade that fell in the trench. He died soon afterwards.

The battalion was relieved on the 1st September, and was stationed at La Clytte, occupied with fatigues, returning to the Ridgewood area on the 5th. During the evening of the next day, Captain H. B. Knott was mortally wounded when in Western Redoubt. This loss was keenly felt, for Captain Knott was a great favourite. On the 10th September the battalion relieved the 10th Lancashire Fusiliers in the front line, and stayed there until the 21st, another long spell. A patrol from "B" Company made a close inspection of the enemy wire and found it very strong, with "knife-rests" placed six deep. The battalion returned to the La Clytte area in reserve on the 22nd, and went into Corps Reserve with the 50th Brigade, ready to move at short notice. A week later, the 9th returned to Ridgewood, being again in 52nd Brigade Reserve. "B" Company, however, took over O5 and P5 trenches, being attached to the 51st Brigade.

These spells in the line had not been without excitement, though life was fairly quiet compared with what came later. Twice Company Sergeant-Major Travill's dug-out was destroyed by shell-fire, but each time he happened to be "not at home." Probably the most exciting incident was when a working party busy on the ditch in No Man's Land was discovered by a German patrol. Evidently Fritz had hurried back to spread the news, for that area suddenly became the centre of a concentrated "hate" from several machine-guns. Fortunately, the ditch was deep enough to afford adequate shelter, and the men of "B" Company made the best use of the cover until the strafe finished and they could scramble back again to their trench.

At this period the ration party was composed of one man per section. The ration dump adjoined an old farm, and, with a bit of luck to assist, it was possible to obtain little luxuries. One section representative was detailed to buy as many eggs as he could get. He had some luck, but as his ration-load was cumbersome, he was at a loss to know how to carry them. Finally he decided to carry them in what he thought was a good place. Negotiating the communication trench was no easy task; and the journey through bay after bay of the front line presented difficulties. One bay from home the sentry on duty recognized the ration carrier, and with a cheerful "Hello! old man," gave him a playful knock on the cap. Tableau!

There was a change of scene on the 1st October, for the

battalion left Ridgewood at night and relieved the 5th North Staffordshires (46th Division) in the famous Hill 60 sector. Here the trenches were in good condition, but very close to the enemy. This famous hill was little more than a mound, a virulent sort of pimple on the earth, but it was of vast importance. It afforded observation to the enemy gunners, and enabled them to direct effectively their fire on the area south-east of Ypres. Hill 60 had been the scene of desperate fighting in April, and the British had wrested it from the Hun. On May 1st the Germans had begun their infamous gas attacks; and, as our men were not protected, the garrison on the hill was wiped out. This dastardly act gave the enemy a footing on the summit, with the British holding a trench on the side of the hill.

To this place Sergeant Browell and a party of men proceeded on the 1st October to take over. They arrived about midday, found things fairly quiet, and began the usual routine of taking over stores, mapping out positions, and so on. This finished, they sat down to have some tea, while awaiting the arrival of the company taking over. Suddenly a terrific explosion shook the earth: the place heaved and rocked, and trenches tumbled in. The garrison seized rifles and bombs, and took up points of vantage. For a while all was confusion, smoke, and flying débris; when the air cleared a little it was seen that the enemy had blown a mine, wrecking part of the trench system, and leaving a crater more than thirty feet across. Following up the explosion, the Huns had attempted to rush the position, but met with a sturdy defence by the North Staffordshire Territorials, who, in spite of a hail of trench mortars, bombs, and grenades kept the Boche at bay.

This episode was a lively welcome to the troops of the 9th, who, after a long, tiring march—the guides *would* lose their way—arrived to take over this cratered hill. It was a proud “B” Company that settled in to guard this famous sector; the grim reminders were dotted about, the little pathetic patches of graves with their neat, eloquent wooden crosses. Hill 60 was one cemetery, pitifully overcrowded.

The proximity of the trenches lent itself to mining operations, and the recently blown mine was in the centre of the frontage allotted to “B” Company. A goodly portion of the fire trench had been damaged at a most exposed part, just where the trench twisted awkwardly, and zigzagged away towards Sanctuary Wood. Work on repairs was immediately put in hand to consolidate the enemy lip of the crater; in the darkness a party began to clear

away the *débris*, and endeavoured to recover the bodies of the dead. Other parties were to cut a way into the crater from both ends of the wrecked trench and so establish connection with the new front trench: No. 8 platoon (Second-Lieutenant Burrows) was on the right, while No. 6 (Lieutenant Wreford-Brown) took the left. These working parties were covered by bombing-squads, as there was a risk of the enemy attempting, in the darkness, to force his way forward. No interference was experienced.

When dawn showed the position more clearly, the 9th Battalion was placed in a position of great disadvantage. Enemy snipers, fifty or sixty yards up the slope, held all points of vantage and proved to be quick and deadly marksmen. Private R. Kay was on sentry duty which necessitated his keeping a look out; before the advantage of the enemy was fully realized, Private Kay was shot through the head. The two trenches had been partially dug, but that from No. 8 platoon was shallow, and exposed, leaving the deeper trench (No. 6 platoon) as the only means of gaining the crater trench. Towards midday, a party of men, under Lance-Corporal B. Taylor, was due to be relieved from their labours in the crater by a party under Lance-Corporal Snowball. The men began to file out on hands and knees down the shallow trench. The vigilant snipers got busy at once, and Lance-Corporal Taylor was shot through the wrist; two men, still in the crater, called to him to return. Private Ord, who was in front of Taylor, turned to his assistance, and, in doing so, exposed himself for a second. It was enough: a bullet struck him. Private Aggie in the trench got one through his cap, but without any bodily damage.

Taylor, though in terrible pain—his wrist was almost severed—managed to crawl back into the crater, but Ord was badly hit and unable to help himself. Despite the deadly accuracy of the sniping, the two unwounded men went to his assistance, and got him back into the crater. At this moment Second-Lieutenant Burrows came on the scene. He saw the plight of the wounded men and, without hesitation, set off along the trench to their aid. Just as he reached the brink of the gap he was shot through the head and killed instantly. It was a sad loss to the company, for he was really “one of us.” With great difficulty the wounded were got out, but Private Ord died as he was being bandaged. He and Second-Lieutenant Burrows were buried in the cemetery behind the hill. Two or three days later Regimental Sergeant-Major Poulter, with Privates Scott and Sharp, made a long trek back to the Hill to erect crosses over the graves.

The snipers got more victims. Privates D. Wrightson and

R. H. Dixon were killed, and Private E. Smith was wounded. Many brave acts were performed during this tour, and, for his share in the crater episode, Lance-Corporal Snowball was promoted Sergeant, and awarded the D.C.M. It was a short spell in the line, but it was lively; much more lively than the haggling, but twelve months earlier, for an extra 1½d. per ton on 'Change! It was therefore with a sense of great relief that the trenches were handed over on the 4th October to the 8th Gordons and the 7th Seaforths. The troops were wiser in the ways of modern warfare, and it was difficult to realize that it was little more than a year ago that 'Change had occupied their time.

The battalion marched to near Dickebusch, and rested in bivouacs—if they were fortunate enough to find any. Hot tea and rum were welcome at 3 a.m. on a day in "chill October"; then the majority pushed their feet into sandbags, wrapped their great-coats around them, lay on the ground, and slept. In the evening the march was continued to Godewaersvelde, where billets were found in the farm-houses and outbuildings, the whole of the 17th Division being in rest. This respite after three months with the British Expeditionary Force was much appreciated, and the time was spent in the usual routine of physical drill, bayonet fighting, bombing—and lectures.

On the 22nd October the battalion left Godewaersvelde at 1.30 p.m. and marched to a canvas camp about one and a half miles south-west of Vlamertinghe, the Brigade now being in Divisional Reserve. While here, on the 27th, His Majesty the King inspected portions of the Second Army at Reninghelst. Each battalion of the 52nd Brigade sent two non-commissioned officers and eighteen men, while the 9th was also represented by the Adjutant, Captain J. F. Chenevix-Trench. The battalion then moved forward, and on the 31st took over the line in Sanctuary Wood, in the salient south of Hooge, "B" Company being in B2.

This tour opened quietly, but the third day produced a bombardment which lengthened the casualty list. Parapets flew in all directions, the enemy having the range to a nicety. It was a hot time, and during the spell the following were killed: Lance-Corporal Viner, Lance-Corporal Muse, Privates Scurr and McGill, while Privates Stevenson, Dunn, and several more were wounded. Relief came on the 9th November, when the 7th Royal Scots Fusiliers, 11th Royal Scots, and 10th Argyle and Sutherland Highlanders took over. These men were just returned from the fighting round Loos, and, in addition to their own kit, were loaded

with Boche helmets, bayonets and other souvenirs of the fray. They displayed their captures with great pride, and offered to sell them at a greater price!

In pitchy blackness the battalion moved out and trudged along the *pavé* road to the camp south-west of Vlamertinghe. Slow progress was made, for often the men had to step off the granite setts on to the earthy border of the road. It should have been earthy, but the liberal rains and the ceaseless traffic had turned it into a quagmire, and the frequent excursions into this brought forth sundry expressions of "Tut! Tut!" "Bother," and even "Dash." However, Poperinghe was near, and the men had a bath and a change, thus ridding them of superfluous mud, etc. That "etc." is very important, for soldiers in a tour of the line accumulated more than inanimate substances.

On the 15th November advance parties were sent to the Hooge trenches, and next night the battalion relieved the 6th Dorsets in the left centre sector of these defences, "B" Company being in Battalion Reserve at Kruisstraat. The 12th Manchesters were on the right, with the 7th Lincolns on the left. Trenches were very bad indeed, and about forty cases of trench-feet were reported. Most of the time was occupied in draining, in an endeavour to free the trenches from water; and the sector was gladly handed over to the 9th West Ridings at night on the 20th November. The battalion went into Brigade Reserve in the Ypres Ramparts (Lille Gate), "B" Company being in cellars in the much battered Convent. Three days later, a move was made to the camp, south-west of Vlamertinghe, in Divisional Reserve. While here Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas took over temporary command of the 52nd Brigade vice Brigadier-General Surtees, Major Bryan the while commanding the battalion.

Another tour in the Hooge sector was from the 2nd to the 6th December, when the battalion came back to Ouderdom and Kruisstraat, "B" Company being at the latter place. This day the 9th lost its Commanding Officer, for Colonel Thomas was promoted and appointed Acting Adjutant and Quartermaster-General, Calais.

Returning to the Hooge sector on the 18th December, the battalion landed in for a violent bombardment. Preparations had been made to resist an intended hostile attack, but the enemy artillery fire made matters hot for a while. Gas was used all over the 17th Divisional area, but our own artillery replied with effect on the closely packed enemy trenches. Few of the attackers were able to leave their trenches; of those who did,

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none got to our lines, and few indeed got back to their own. The intended attack was an absolute failure, and must have proved costly.

A loss was sustained by the battalion on the 22nd. Captain J. Leadbitter Knott was transferred to the 10th Battalion, The West Yorkshire Regiment, and promoted to Major. His promotion was well merited, but this fact did not lessen the sadness of parting with an old comrade.

A return to Kruisstraat was made early in the morning of the 24th, and here in dug-outs Christmas Day, the first overseas, was spent. It was not possible in the circumstances to have a special menu, so "we made the best of it, ate stew and rice, sang a Christmas Carol or two, and carried on." Next day the battalion took over billets in the Ramparts at Menin Gate, Ypres, "B" Company being in cellars in a broken-down building on the south side of the Menin road. The usual reserve duties were performed, those nightly trips to the Hooge sector, repairing and draining trenches. It was an unhealthy pastime, but on the return journey on New Year's Eve, the men spurted for two reasons: firstly, a special rum-ration was promised, and secondly, 5·9 shells were dropping on the road. Either reason would have been ample, but both together was an overdose of incentive. However, it *was* a special rum-ration, and quite a lively time was spent seeing the New Year in. Oh, quite!

CHAPTER IV

LA PANNE AND THE BLUFF: JANUARY 1916—MARCH 1916

THE New Year did bring good news, as Lieutenant P. D. Robinson, his servant, and one other were ordered to proceed as a billeting party to a rest area. This small party met early on the 2nd January at the Menin Gate, and went to Brigade Headquarters; thence by motor bus almost uninterrupted—there *was* a short halt at St. Omer!—until about 5 p.m., when they reached La Panne. It was a typical French village, quite pleasant, and, being winter, the cesspools did not over-accentuate their presence. In those days the refinements of Town Major had not appeared, and the billeting party spent some time in finding and apportioning the quarters.

The afternoon of the 8th January found the party at Audruicq Station waiting to guide the troops to their billets. About 4 p.m. the train steamed slowly in. That sounds quite normal, but a troop-train in France was not normal. Trucks—that was the stuff they gave the troops! “40 Hommes ou 8 Chevaux” was the inscription painted on them, and that simplified matters. Divide your strength (men) by forty, and your strength (animals) by eight, and there it was. So many trucks were allotted. The men could squeeze in, but the entraining of the animals was not quite so easy. Mules did not like the hollow-sounding space, and showed their distaste by violent action. Not that the men went into ecstasies; far from it; but discipline did not permit of the exhibition of gnashing teeth, nor the attempt to impress hoof-marks on unoffending ribs.

Picture the train pulling into Audruicq. The sliding doors were open, and men sat with their legs dangling over the side, some stood behind, taking the air; others were lost in the depths. Behind the troop-trucks were similar covered trucks containing the scared horses and mules. Farther to the rear were the “floats” bearing the wagons, General Service and limbered, field kitchens and Maltese carts. The troops had come direct from the trenches at Hooge, entrained and travelled overnight. For three days washing and shaving had been in abeyance; for several nights sleep had been

a matter of luck and constitution. Many looked as though they thought a sleep on the station would be the essence of bliss.

One question was supreme: "How far to billets?"

"Five miles!" answered the billeting party, and the rejoinders to this estimate were somewhat pungent.

Fatigue parties—glorious expression!—were detailed to unload wagons and animals, and the battalion set off to march the weary miles, arriving at La Panne about 6.30 p.m. Billets were fairly good, and the men soon settled down. Only one platoon had some difficulty, the landlady of No. 8 having locked the door, and she refused to open it. Captain Wreford-Brown came on the scene, but Madame would not reconsider her doings. Persuasion proving useless to move either Madame or her daughter, the officer tried it on the lock. It soon yielded, and the men took possession of the out-building. Within a day or two, however, Madame and Mademoiselle were on good terms with the soldiers, and when, three weeks later, the troops left for the trenches, both good ladies wept bitterly.

The men settled down to enjoy their well-earned rest. A couple of days were spent in cleaning up, overhauling kits and clothing, and refitting where necessary. For the first time since arriving in France, buttons and badges had to be cleaned, and this regulation of peace-time soldiering had come to stay. Why, had not the amount of mud on a uniform proclaimed the doughtiness of the warrior? Now, to the cold official eye, it only proclaimed his "dortiness"!

There was a rather belated Christmas dinner held in a large barn in the village. The preparations reflected great credit on those responsible for the feed, and the arrangements were perfect. A grand concert followed, another great success to round off a joyous day. The weather had become disappointingly fine, so there was nothing to interfere with the steady routine of training. Vocabularies extended, and an astonishing amount of money must have changed hands for *œufs et pommes-de-terre frites*.

The billet occupied by No. 6 platoon proved an exception to the general harmony of soldiers and "landlords." Several small articles were missed from the kits, and these thefts went on until Sergeant Williams felt that his reputation as a detective was at stake. In a dramatic manner he tracked and caught the culprit, one of the farm hands. Matters came to a crisis, however, when someone kicked the pet pig, and No. 6 evacuated the position rather hastily, but in good humour and order, before the enraged Madame. The men took up a new line of defence in a barn,

which, while not so good as that just vacated, was on a farm where the pigs were more under control, fed out of their own troughs, and did not feed out of the cook's dixie when the cook wasn't looking.

This excellent rest period came to an end rather suddenly on the 4th February, for at night the battalion paraded, marched to Audruicq, and entrained, steaming slowly into Poperinghe at 6.30 a.m. At about noon the troops were in camp at Reninghelst, taking over from the 7th Shropshires. The stay here was short, for the next night we relieved the 12th Yorks in "P" trenches south of St. Eloi, where we had had our tuition under our 1st Battalion. Nothing of importance took place, whizz-bangs being the chief worries.

During one of these showers of whizz-bangs a direct hit was obtained again on Company Sergeant-Major Travill's dug-out; but he was again "not at home." Everything inside was riddled by the splinters. Before the shell landed there were several layers of thigh gum-boots on the roof ready for issue; they were not there afterwards. Probably the German gunners reported "heavy casualties inflicted" if they observed the great number of legs and feet (of the gum-boots) flying in the air!

From this sector the first party of Quaysiders left for England for commissions, some fourteen non-commissioned officers and men from "B" Company being in one batch. Although our sector was quiet, the rumbling of artillery fire was indicative of dirty work afoot elsewhere, apparently about Hill 60. At this time it was the custom for the machine-gunners and the bombers to be relieved a day before the battalion. This allowed the incoming gunners and bombers to be in position to cover the relief. On the 13th February, the relief began, and we were surprised to find a number of Tynesiders amongst the 10th Yorks; these men had enlisted in the Durhams, but had been transferred without option. Next day, the battalion relief was in progress when the move was cancelled, the 10th West Yorks, less gunners and bombers, being kept in support.

About 6 p.m. on that day the enemy had, after exploding mines, captured some trenches held by the 51st Brigade on our left, north of the Ypres-Comines Canal. Two counter-attacks had failed to oust the intruders, and heavy shelling was continuing. The 51st Brigade had heavy casualties in these spirited counter-attacks, and on the 15th a third was attempted, again without success. Our bombers took part in this,¹ assisting the 7th East

¹ See Appendix II.

Yorks. Next day the battalion was relieved by the 29th Canadians and marched to billets in Dickebusch, and stayed there until the 21st, "B" Company, however, moving to Voormezeele on the 20th. Until the 23rd the 9th Battalion was at Reninghelst in Divisional Reserve.

At about this time Major Westmacott took over command of the battalion, Lieutenant-Colonel Bryan being on sick-leave. It was a long, weary march to relieve the 2nd Suffolks just north of the Ypres-Comines Canal in front of the enemy's new position. "B" Company was on the right against the Canal at Spoil Bank. The trenches were in a deplorable condition, and the first two days, the 24th and 25th February, were quiet, and this gave time for the troops to get the bearings of the new sector. Weather conditions changed; night and day snow and sleet fell, making the hastily dug trenches into a morass. Rations were got up on a light railway winding along the low ground by the side of the Canal bank. The whole journey was exposed, and ration parties had an unenviable time. Casualties occurred, and many exciting incidents fell to the lot of these parties. Regimental Sergeant-Major Poulter, however, in his usual calm and firm manner, saved many an awkward situation, and by his coolness prevented the casualty list from growing longer. And, too, he saw that the rations and fuel did reach the men in the line.

Plans were made for the retaking of the lost trenches, and work began on new assembly trenches. It was almost a hopeless task, in showers of sleet, trying to dig the mud. Add to this the fact that the bombardment was severe, for the enemy obviously had ideas for extending his gains. At 4.30 p.m. on the 26th he began to increase his artillery fire, ceasing this at about 5 p.m., when the machine-gunners and grenadiers took up the firing. Picks and shovels were downed, and rifles and bombs were taken up in readiness. Our own Divisional artillery, supported by that of the Northumbrian Territorial Division,¹ replied vigorously, and matters were lively. Ample supplies of bombs were at hand, and, the trenches being close together, our bombers availed themselves of the opportunity. In the face of all this "back-chat," the enemy dared not leave his trenches, and, soon afterwards, more normal conditions prevailed, leaving our line intact. We had twenty-eight casualties as a result, but the enemy losses must have been much heavier.

The enemy rightly guessed that efforts would be made to regain the lost ground, but he was kept in suspense by a series of demon-

¹ See Appendix III.

strations. Our artillery fire intensified; the enemy replied; and the scene was set for an advance that did not take place. Fritz was using large quantities of shrapnel that burst into a heavy black cloud over the trees that covered the Bluff. Every tree was scarred, and ripped; many were mere stumps, desolate and forlorn. By the 1st March, as a consequence of the hard work put in by the battalion, the preparations for the real assault were complete, but at the price of many casualties. Those who were left were feeling the strain of nearly a week of hard work under constant shelling. The final demonstration was timed for 4.5 p.m. on this day, and, on the tick, every gun within range burst into action, together with rapid fire from the machine-guns, supported by a continuous shower of bombs.

The previous night the artillery, aided by parties of infantry, had dragged forward two field-guns, through shell-holes and over trenches, until one was actually in the front line, the other being on the Bluff behind. These guns fired rapidly over open sights, but, after getting off twenty-seven rounds at point-blank range that in the front line was knocked out by a direct hit, two of the team being wounded. The other gun continued firing throughout the action. Enemy retaliation was severe; their Véry-lights illuminated the sky for miles around; and they must have anxiously awaited the British attack. We did not attack! At a specified moment, the artillery ceased fire; machine-gunners, riflemen, and bombers desisted from their murderous pastimes, and the sudden silence seemed unnatural. Probably the enemy thought that the intended attack had been broken, and they could settle down to rest.

There was no rest for the 9th Battalion, for, during the night, the weary, mud-stained troops filed out of the trench under cover of the Canal bank, their places being taken by the 76th Brigade of the mighty 3rd Division, "B" Company being relieved by the 2nd Suffolks and 2nd Welsh. Altogether, the 9th was relieved by no less than five other battalions. At 4.29 a.m. on the 2nd March, the 3rd Division, without a gun being fired, easily took all its objectives, the way having been well prepared; counter-attacks were driven off. At the end of these operations both sides could show a long list of casualties, and the British a slight gain of ground.

While this fighting was proceeding the battalion was wearily trailing, rather than marching, back to the camp near Reninghelst; but the men were much cheered by the news of the success of the 3rd Division. Next day we moved into the reserve position at Dickebusch, with its never-ending streams of traffic, with its big

R.E. dumps where we so often fatigued, and its snug little estaminets, complete with pianos. Many a cheerful sing-song was held in these places during the off-duty hours in the otherwise cheerless winter nights.

At night on the 6th March, the battalion prepared to move back into the line. The weather was still bad, much snow falling, only to be churned into slush and mud; so bad were the roads that the pace was very slow, and four hours were occupied in reaching the trenches occupied by the 7th East Yorks in the St. Eloi sector. Calm had followed the storm of the last few weeks, and the tour was quiet: work on repairing trenches was practically suspended owing to the state of the ground. On the 8th March, the Battalion Dressing Station, situated in a partially demolished village just behind the line, received much unwelcome attention from the enemy gunners. The cases in the Medical Officers' hands were chiefly "P.U.O."; but even men with influenza can scatter rapidly when there is every prospect of the house tumbling on to them. One or two men were slightly wounded, including the Dressing Station Sergeant, Bob Bell, who had worked so well at the Bluff. His wounds were slight, and he returned to duty almost at once.

The stay at St. Eloi was short, for on the 9th the 6th Dorsets relieved the battalion. Then began again the "long, long trail" to Reninghelst Camp, which was reached in the early hours of the 10th. Next day the battalion paraded at 9.30 a.m. and began a long march; everybody stuck it cheerfully, for their backs were to the front line, always the most heartening position for a march! The destination was the II Corps area at Oultersteene, near Meteren. However pleasant to contemplate the direction, it was as well that the march was not longer, for several men admit being "just about on our hands and knees."

Sunday, the 12th March, was springlike, a very welcome change. Billets were good, spirits revived, and the men soon forgot the gruelling they had just had, and settled down to enjoy the rest. By some oversight the Yorks arrived on the 13th, and claimed "B" Company's billets; this was disputed, naturally; but as the Yorks had just come from the line, the 9th Battalion gave way to them, pending a settlement, and took up temporary quarters in the Divisional Baths. By the 15th it was decided that the Yorks were in the wrong billets; they vacated them, and our troops again took possession. During this rest Lieutenant-Colonel Bryan returned from England and took over command of the battalion.

Two or three days were spent feverishly polishing everything



BRIGADIER-GENERAL H. C. SURTEES, C.B., C.M.G., M.V.O., D.S.O.

[*Facing p. 29.*

from the smallest button to the largest transport wagon, for, on the 16th, another beautiful day, the battalion was inspected by the II Corps Commander. The next day, parades being finished in good time, many men visited either Bailleul or Meteren. Little did they realize that two years later the battalion would be fighting a grim, retreating fight over the very same ground; in fact, a party narrowly escaped capture while halting in the Divisional Baths!

Another inspection took place on the 18th, this time by Brigadier-General H. C. Surtees, C.B., M.V.O., D.S.O., who held a farewell parade on relinquishing command of the 52nd Brigade. All ranks were sorry to see him leave us; he had been our Brigadier from the beginning in England, and he had seen us through our baptism of fire until we were pardonably regarding ourselves as veterans. It was a sad parting with a good old friend. Brigadier-General Surtees has called himself a "dug-out." He had been a Military Attaché in Turkey, and had commanded a battalion of the Coldstream Guards before taking over the 52nd Brigade on the 15th September, 1914. For his work in France he had been recommended for the command of a Division, but the Field-Marshal deemed him too old for this work. We have the happiest of memories of him, and it was with sincere regret that we saw him go. His new duties of Inspector of Infantry showed that his valuable work had been recognized and was to be further utilized in the service of the country.

The rest terminated next day, for at 9 a.m. the battalion took to the road, and at 12.30 p.m. had settled in the La Crèche area. At 6 a.m. the following day the march continued, and shortly after noon the battalion was in billets in Armentières. It was the first visit actually outside the Salient, round and about which we had spent our first eight months on foreign soil. Certainly no more desperate and dangerous sector could have been found wherein to learn the arts of actual warfare, and the 9th Battalion had had a long and trying apprenticeship in the Immortal Salient.

CHAPTER V

ARMENTIÈRES—ST. MARTIN—COISY: MARCH 1916—JUNE 1916

IN Armentières we found plenty of civilians, shops of every description, and, in spite of the town being right in the trench zone, "business as usual." As the battalion only stayed one night there was not much opportunity to make a thorough investigation of the place. On the 22nd March, the 9th Battalion relieved the 13th Northumberland Fusiliers in the front line east of Armentières. As the town compared favourably with Ypres, so did the trenches with those of the Salient. The "mere drains and ditches" gave place to well-made, deep, dry trenches, with good dug-outs that afforded real shelter. And, too, it was a quiet sector, for we soon discovered that it was quite feasible to walk, in daylight, down the communication trenches, Spain Avenue or Gloucester Avenue.

The reserve line, Vancouver Avenue, with its low but well-built dug-outs, was "a home from home"; only, the orchard just behind the front line was a spot to be avoided. Here the German gunners loved to deposit their surplus shells. The front line was good, but it was now and again badly bent by heavy trench mortars. These "flying pigs" could be seen coming, and, after the report of the trench mortar, it was a nerve-racking business watching the flight of these huge and terrible objects. They rose in the air, turned over and over deceptively in their flight, landed in our lines, and exploded with a frightful rending crash, creating immense havoc. Dodging the "flying pigs" became a fine art, with a heavy penalty for the slow-moving!

A company cookhouse was established in Houplines on the outskirts of the town, and each meal-time the boilers were packed into small trucks and pushed down light wooden rails along the road between the two communication trenches. Rations were dumped each evening at the cookhouse and transported up the line in a similar manner. For the first four days "B" Company was in Vancouver Reserve trench, but on the 25th the Company took over the front line. This appeared to be a signal for the Huns to develop some liveliness, for about noon on the Sunday, the T.M.

report was heard. Everybody was on the alert watching for the "pig," when the enemy began with whizz-bangs and grenades. This was much too lively to be a "Pleasant Sunday Afternoon," and the strafe went on for half an hour. The Company, fortunately, suffered no casualties, but two Canadian engineers on duty in the line were unable to dodge one bursting mortar. Both were killed.

Many gaps had been made in the wire, and at some places the trenches had been converted into a series of deep holes. It was necessary to keep a sharp look-out as the enemy might attempt an entry through these gaps. There was a further bombardment on the 27th March, but not so intense; following it, parties were busy repairing the defences. We were relieved by the 7th Yorks, and returned to billets in Armentières. Strange it was, to be able, within half an hour of leaving the trenches, to enter a tea-shop and enjoy tea and cakes. This was soldiering-de-luxe. There were cinemas to go to, and hosts of estaminets, good, bad, and indifferent. One made the choice—and paid accordingly!

The next spell in the line was from the 7th to the 15th April, and the battalion returned to rest billets in Armentières. As the succeeding tour was to begin on St. George's Day, the celebrations took place on the 22nd April, consisting of a special concert and cinema show. On the morning of the 23rd, each man wore his red and white roses, kindly supplied by the Chamber of Commerce Military Committee; and at night, when parading for the line, the roses were still worn. There must have been some wiliness in the estaminets to resist the appeals of mademoiselle-behind-the-counter!

As the battalion was winding its way along Spain Avenue shells were dropping too close for our liking. One burst close to the edge of the trench, and partially buried some of the men, though no one was actually hit. It looked as though there was something doing. We relieved the 7th Yorks, and the shelling eased off, until about 7 a.m. It was heavy throughout the day, and on the 25th, and most of the men lay low. There were many exciting moments, even in Vancouver trenches, but we missed the powerful retaliation of the Salient. We appeared to be short of both guns and ammunition here, but on the 26th our artillery fire became heavier. Probably one of our "circuses" had arrived. Then Fritz took up the shelling, and the front line and orchard had a lively time. The outskirts of Armentières and Houplines came in for a share, and our cookhouse was a more-than-usual hot spot.

The enemy bombardment reached a climax about 7.30 p.m., and the S.O.S. went up from the 9th West Ridings, on the left of the Divisional front, the enemy attempting a raid. Not one of the

raiders reached our lines, and, after suffering heavy casualties, the survivors were glad to get back to the shelter of their trenches. After this attempt, the sector became normally quiet. As "B" Company went forward on the 27th to the front line, the men realized how fortunate they had been in Vancouver. The orchard had suffered an upheaval. Trees were smashed, trenches wrecked, dug-outs demolished, and the garrison there must have had a lively four days. We spent our tour in "tidying up after the Boche," and returned to Armentières on the 1st May.

The Medical Officer got busy then, for the inoculation season was on. Any thoughts of a quiet forty-eight hours' rest following inoculation were rudely dispelled, for on the 5th May, about 8 p.m., the gas gongs sounded. There was quite a sudden interest in gas-helmets, and a stampede to get faulty ones replaced. Stiff arms, the result of the Medical Officer's dirty work, were regarded as no barrier to the donning of full fighting kit; so, amidst much groaning and grunting, the 9th Battalion "stood-to" awaiting orders. To while away the time there was a real old "B" Company concert in the billet yard. Probably this was enough in the way of counter-attack, for the battalion was not required in the trenches, and returned to billets at 10.30 p.m.

During this spell in Divisional Reserve, parties were detailed nightly to assist in repairing the damage done to the defences. A patrol of riflemen and bombers went out to cover the working parties. Some of these workers drove in the pickets for the wire entanglements, and others ran out the wire, leaving gaps for the covering party to return. These gaps were then filled with wire. On the 6th the enemy discovered the parties working, and suddenly opened fire. Corporal Stevens was killed and Privates Chandler and D. Brown were wounded. Stevens was the Orderly Room Corporal, and, in an ordinary way, would not have been on a working party. As he was about to be commissioned, however, he was getting practical experience in the line when he met his death. More trouble was experienced the next night, the enemy again opening fire on the parties.

The last tour in this sector began on the 9th May, as before, four days in Vancouver, and four in the orchard. It was a quiet time, except on the 13th, when the ration party came into some excitement. The bogies were loaded, and were nearing the trenches when the Hun switched on a searchlight stationed behind his lines. The beam shone straight down the little railway, and a burst of machine-gun fire greeted the surprised ration-party. The bogie ran off the rails and tipped out the rations; the party scuttled like

rabbits into the ditches on either side of the road ; the beam glared down the empty track. As soon as it was switched off, the party emerged, reloaded the bogie, and pushed it hurriedly but quietly to the trenches.

On the 15th, in daylight, the battalion handed over to the 2nd Canterbury Battalion, New Zealand Expeditionary Force, and moved back to the billets in Armentières. A few rough times we had had in this sector, but generally it was a decent spot, and it appeared quite unlikely that the battalion would get into such another. Two years later we were destined to return, but in vastly different circumstances. Hand-to-hand fighting in the streets was the story then, as the troops withdrew slowly, leaving the town in German hands.

At 10.30 p.m. the next day, 16th May, the battalion marched out of Armentières to Estaires, arriving in billets there at 2.30 a.m. A halt was made for a few hours, but at 1 p.m. a long march was undertaken to Morbecque in the heat of the day. At 7 a.m. on the 18th, the march was continued, a shorter distance, to Racquinghem ; and the next day, again early, we marched to St. Martin-au-Laert, near St. Omer. The *pavé* roads had caused many cases of sore feet, and the march during the heat of the day created much distress. It was indeed welcome news that St. Martin was the destination, even if it were a training area ! The billets were good, and as Saturday and Sunday, the 20th and 21st May, were rest days, it was pleasant being able to explore such a fine town as St. Omer. Opinion was unanimous in the battalion that this was a good place " for the duration."

Monday saw a beginning of a long programme of training ; serious work indeed. The parades were suitably arranged—this is the opinion of the troops, be it noted—and the programme was : Réveillé, 4 a.m. ; parade, 5.30 a.m. ; drill for three hours ; breakfast ; then more drill. After the first day, the field kitchens accompanied the troops to the training ground and provided breakfast there. The cooks were kept busy frying the eggs purchased by the men at their billets. Usually, the afternoons were times of leisure ; but, on some days, the men were drilled near the billets for an hour after tea. Everyone fired a course on the ranges, and there were several full field days, when operations on a large scale were carried out in conjunction with artillery, cavalry, and other branches of the service. It was pleasant on these excursions to fight battles with blank ammunition ; the weather was fine, and the countryside round St. Omer a delightful change from the desolation of the " forward areas."

This elegant form of war service ended on the 11th June, a Sunday. At 8 p.m. the troops, forty per truck as usual, paid a cheerful farewell to St. Omer as the train steamed slowly out. Yes, it was a pleasant interlude—but the Army was not giving “buckshee” summer holidays. War is a grimmer business; and every man felt, if he did not know, that something hefty was to follow this long preparation. Next morning at 5.45 a.m. the battalion detrained at Longueau, about four kilometres south-east of Amiens; then marched to billets at Coisy, where breakfast was served about noon. The answer to the obvious question will be supplied by the cooks. About fifteen days were spent here in hard training. It was evident from the quiet but colossal preparations that something big was afoot: guns of all sizes were being hauled towards the Somme area; troops were on the move, including numerous Royal Army Medical Corps units, with wagon-loads of stretchers, and even loads of plain wooden crosses. The great human sacrifice was being prepared.

On the 27th June the next move forward began at about 10.30 a.m. to a carefully screened canvas camp amongst the trees at Heilly on the banks of the Ancre River. Three days later, on the 30th June, the battalion struck camp, stored the tents and camp stores, and at 7.30 p.m. paraded for the next move to hutments in the Bois des Tailles. This was a weary march in the darkness, the crowded roads causing many stoppages. It was 1 a.m. before the huts were reached, and another hour elapsed before the men were got into their proper quarters. Réveillé was at 4 a.m., and the men, after less than two hours of sleep, woke to the fact that this was The Day.

In the pale light before dawn, the men were paraded from dump to dump, at the first getting an extra hundred rounds of S.A.A., at the next two bombs, then on to another for two sandbags. Here were stored packs and great-coats and all spare kit; from now on it was battle-order. This meant the usual equipment, less pack and great-coat, the haversack being carried on the back in place of the pack. In the haversack were mess-tin, towel and shaving kit, extra socks and the iron-ration. Water-bottle and entrenching tool were carried, two hundred and twenty rounds of ammunition, two bombs, two sandbags, and in each section some bore picks and others shovels, awkward things to handle, but decidedly useful later on. Machine-gunners and bombers with their extra loads had rather more than a fair share to carry.

The 1st of July dawned.



"THE FUSILIER."

[Facing p. 35.

Drawn by]

[Lieut. A. K. Lawrence (19th Battalion).

CHAPTER VI

THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME, JULY 1916

ALL these incidents in the recent moves of the 9th Battalion had taken place in a pandemonium. Hundreds of guns had been concentrated on the front, and for weeks the volume of sound had been rising. The reports of the guns, the whine and whirr of shells passing overhead, each calibre with its distinctive note, the crashing of the bursts, the almost equal volume of the enemy's retaliation created a din that was hideous in its infernal intensity. Death was astride each screaming missile. As the khaki-clad troops waited for zero hour excitement ran through all ranks; gaps were cut in the lines of the attackers; men were killed before they clambered over the top to attack the deep entrenchments of the enemy, entrenchments perfected after months of continuous work backed by all the ingenuity of science.

Smoke hung heavily over the battlefield at dawn. Momentarily shell followed shell, burst succeeded burst. It seemed as though the limit of material resources had been reached, or that the limits of human endurance would be passed. Not so, for at 6.30 a.m. the firing intensified; bursts of shells were no longer staccato; they were continuous, thunderous, murderous. One hour of "hell unleashed" followed, and at zero hour, 7.30 a.m., the attacking troops swept forward. The Battle of the Somme had opened in reality, but it was like a monstrous phantasmagoria: khaki figures, smoke, gas, stench, din, cracklings, thuds, cries, snaps, flame, blood, fragments of human bodies, gasps, gurglings, moans, awesome attitudes, stumbling, fallings, lurchings, and more smoke to blot out the gaps where men had but recently moved. ". . . our troops met with immediate success, and rapid progress was made."

The 17th Division was in reserve just behind the attack. News filtered through of the steady progress; large parties of weary, scared-looking prisoners passed through on their way to the cages, and the reserve troops were not called into action. The line at dawn had been approximately east of Maricourt, west

of Mametz, the outskirts of Fricourt, just west of La Boisselle, Ovillers, Thiepval, St. Pierre Divion, Beaumont Hamel, and Serre. By night the British had pushed forward to the edge of Bernafay Wood, through Montauban and Mametz, and on both flanks of Fricourt, and La Boisselle. Farther north Thiepval and Beaumont Hamel resisted all attacks.

Next day at 4 a.m. troops of the 17th Division were called into action to take Fricourt. The 9th Battalion, after having a hot drink, moved at 5.45 a.m. to Morlancourt, ready to move again at short notice. The battalion was in reserve to the 17th Division, but attacking troops of the Division had by midday captured Fricourt, and had gone forward to the capture of Fricourt Wood. At 4 a.m. on the 3rd July the battalion moved forward to Méaulte, only to return to the original line about midnight. While here "B" Company sustained a great loss, for Captain O. E. Wreford-Brown was mortally wounded. Ever solicitous for the welfare of the men, who loved him devotedly, he was moving amongst them, and had just been joking with a party of stretcher-bearers, telling them that only fighters were needed up there. With a cheerful smile he passed on, and had only got about two bays farther when a shell burst, and the ominous cry went up, "Stretcher-bearers." Three days later he died, and "B" Company lost a trusted leader.¹

At 8 p.m. the battalion moved forward over recently won ground, littered with dead, the 52nd Brigade relieving the 21st Division on the line Shelter Wood—Round Wood Alley. The 9th Battalion took over from the 8th South Staffordshires, along the hedge line between Bottom Wood and Shelter Wood, the relief being complete by 11.45 p.m. Just after midnight the 15th Corps Artillery opened an intense bombardment on Quadrangle Trench running parallel to the line Mametz Wood—Contalmaison. It was a short bombardment, but severe, and right on the position to be attacked by two battalions of the 7th Division, and two battalions of the 52nd Brigade, 17th Division. On our right were the 1st Welsh Fusiliers, and on the left the 10th Lancashires, all four attacking battalions being on a frontage of about eight hundred yards. As the barrage lifted, the infantry rushed forward over the intervening two hundred yards, and so splendidly was the rush timed that the troops were in the enemy's line before he had time to get his machine-guns into action. Many of the Germans scrambled out, and ran for it, followed into the darkness by a hail of bullets and bombs. The others fought, but no

¹ See Appendix IV.

prisoners were taken : bayonets were busy. At once the work of consolidation began, some using picks and shovels, and some delving with their entrenching tools. Before daybreak "B" Company was withdrawn to a line just behind, in support, dug themselves in, and in the midst of heavy shelling the men lay down and slept.

The enemy did not relish the loss of Quadrangle Trench, and he swept the area with shell-fire all day long. Naturally, he had the range of it to a nicety, and the list of casualties grew. The men, elated by their success of the early morning, began to feel powerless under the constant shelling to which they could make no effective reply. It was expected that other troops would come through the lines at night and take up the attack, but the 9th Battalion had to hold on, and the same weary waiting was their portion on the 6th July. Late in the afternoon orders were received for the battalion to attack again after midnight. Parties were sent out to replenish the water supplies, each man of the party taking six or eight water-bottles. The only source of supply was a partly smashed German water-pump some hundreds of yards away. Soon a crowd gathered there, and, despite the bursting shells and the threats of a military policeman, the men filled the bottles and returned "overland" to their trenches. It was a miracle the casualties were so few.

The new objective, Quadrangle Support, with Contalmaison on the left and Mametz Wood on the right, was a difficult proposition. The trench was situated just over the brow of a slope a matter of nearly eight hundred yards away, and there was a labyrinth of trenches, and each portion could be enfiladed from another portion, and all the system was flanked either by the Wood or by Contalmaison. It was truly formidable, and the distance the attackers had to cover before reaching it was, in modern warfare, immense. No harder task could have been assigned to any troops. An official statement issued afterwards said: "The defensive system thus exemplified could only be dealt with methodically according to a pre-arranged plan, after details of the defence had been ascertained by actual experiment." To the 9th Battalion fell the lot of being the first experiment.

At midnight 6th/7th July two companies of the battalion ("B" and "C") assembled in Quadrangle Trench, with the 10th Lancashire Fusiliers again on the left, and the 14th Royal Welsh Fusiliers (38th Division) on the right. There was an intense artillery fire for thirty-five minutes before the troops went over the top. A reconnoitring patrol under Second-Lieutenant

H. Woods had been out to ascertain the strength and position of the enemy. Most were killed or wounded, and their information did not give much hope of success. Fearing more attacks in the darkness, the enemy swept No Man's Land with bursts of whizz-bangs, rifle and machine-gun fire.

The barrage was intense, and the troops followed it up closely. To their consternation they found that the enemy wire was practically uncut. As the men lined up for the final charge, they encountered terrible machine-gun and rifle fire from the front, and from both flanks. The enemy had alternative shelters to escape barrages, and when the barrage lifted, the Huns crowded back into the main trench. It was a race, and the uncut wire held up the attackers, leaving them at the mercy of the enemy. Never sparing in his use of flares, the Boche used hundreds of red ones, which, falling behind the assaulting troops, showed them up clearly to the ever-ready gunners and riflemen. Here were the companies, trapped, amidst a hail of bullets from three directions, unable to get forward or back. Of the three "B" Company officers in the attack, Lieutenants A. E. Waud and A. G. Cornell were killed almost immediately, and Captain P. D. Robinson, another great favourite and the last of the original company officers, was mortally wounded while rallying the men. All around men were falling, killed or wounded; at such point-blank range the bullets pierced the steel helmets.

In this desperate and critical position the 9th hung on, taking what cover was afforded by shell-holes. The order was given to withdraw, and, as the enemy fire slackened, survivors slowly made their way back. Heroic deeds passed almost unnoticed in the darkness; under the very noses of the enemy wounded men were brought in. The order to withdraw did not reach one non-commissioned officer and man, who, together with a wounded pal, lay in a shell-hole just outside the German wire. To move was to be shot: so for the long, weary day, under our own shell-fire, they lay there, motionless, and at night crawled back through the inferno of No Man's Land to our lines.

It was some time before losses could be estimated. One young man of "B" Company missed his elder brother, and was decidedly doleful. About an hour later the "missing" man arrived, and a joyful reunion ensued. It appeared that he, too, had not heard the order to withdraw, and he had dug and dug until he had cover enough and to spare. Only then did he take a look round, to find himself alone! His predicament caused much merriment, and the younger brother, anxious for the family prestige, turned

on the elder. Another war broke out, to the huge delight of the onlookers, who did not cease teasing the digger over his "lone claim."

The battalion was reorganized at once, went over the top in open order—a very thin line—ready to attack again, but the order was cancelled, as, after the terrible losses, there was scant hope of success. At 7.45 a.m. the 12th Manchesters and 9th West Ridings went through our line in a glorious—but vain—attempt to take the Quadrangle Support in broad daylight. "It was splendid to see them as they crossed our line in single file, rifles with ready fixed bayonets slung over their shoulders, cigarettes in their lips, and without a sign of concern. They moved into open order in the open, under cover of our heavy artillery barrage, and immediately the guns lifted they charged. A few actually reached the objective, some tried to bomb up Pearl Alley and Quadrangle Alley, but the opposition was too great, and they in turn fell back with losses no less than our own."

The battalion on our left had suffered the same fate. Parties of the 10th Lancashires did get into Pearl Alley near Contal-maison, but were driven out by flanking fire from the ruins of that village. They were followed by a counter-attack delivered by the Prussian Guards. With the aid of the 2nd Worcesters, however, they repulsed this attack.

While these events were happening, "B" Company was withdrawn into support, only arriving there in a hail of shrapnel; several more were wounded. Hardly had the company got into the support trenches when orders came to rejoin the battalion in the line and take part in another assault. There was only one communication trench leading from Bottom Wood to the line, and this was the only means of rejoining the battalion. The congestion was horrible, men trying to go up, others trying to go down. Gaps had been blown in the trench, and snipers awaited every move. Dead and wounded were everywhere; badly wounded men struggled on without assistance to reach the dressing stations beyond, pitiful remnants of what had, just a few moments before, been splendid manhood.

The ranks of the regimental stretcher-bearers had been sadly depleted by casualties; those still on duty worked unceasingly, heroically, doing their utmost to cope with the vast stream of wounded men. The Medical Officer and his staff worked day and night at the First Aid post, and, if a man were able to walk, he went on to the clearing stations beyond. Stretcher cases were handed over to the Royal Army Medical Corps, who deserve

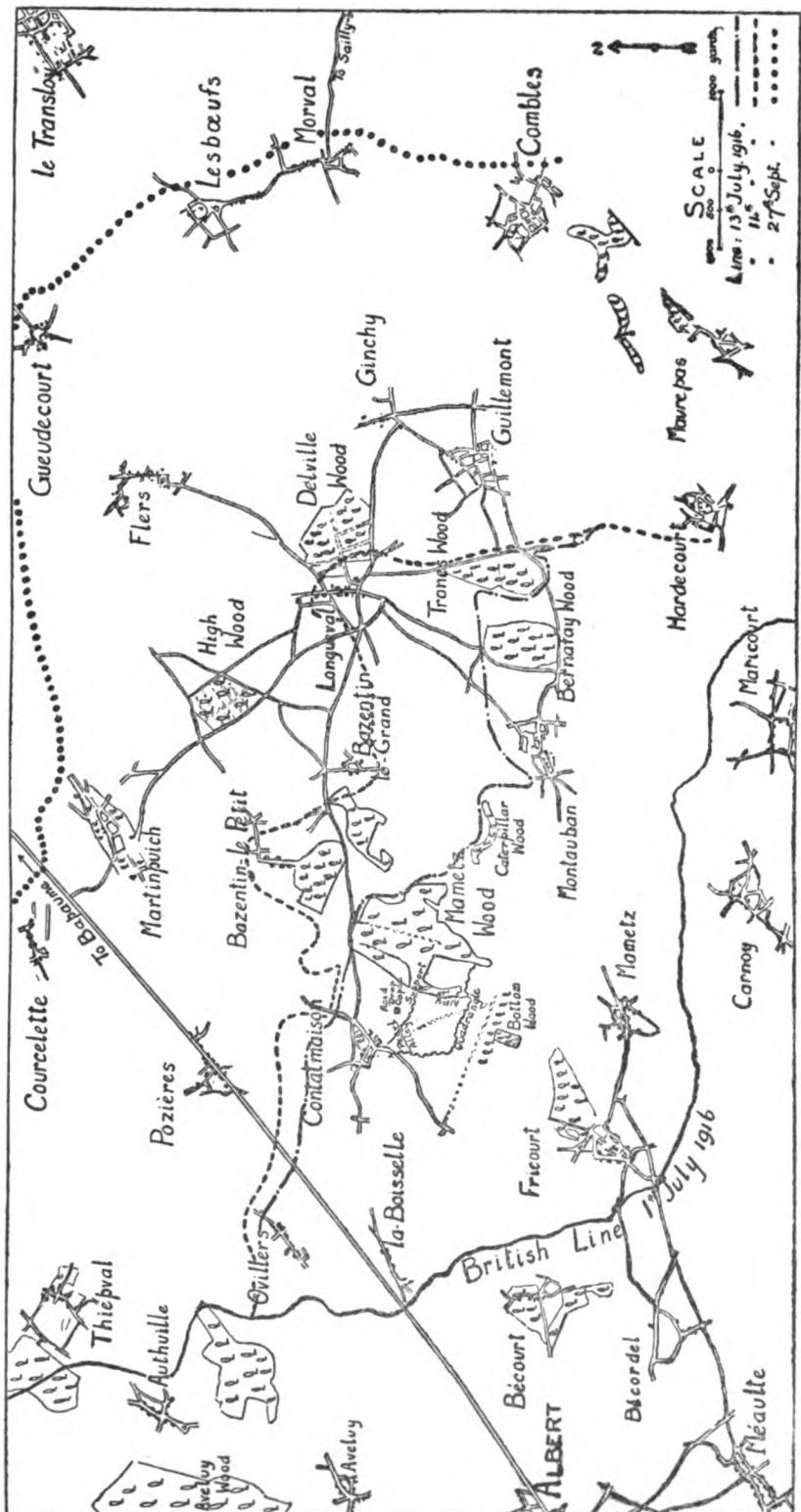
40 9th (Service) Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers

every praise for their work. From Bottom Wood to the forward dressing station stretcher-bearers were busy, making that perilous double-journey time and again, with a quiet devotion to duty that merits recognition.

In this congested trench was "B" Company, trying to force a way along it to the battalion. The Commanding Officer of the Manchesters was trying to reach his men who had suffered so badly. Impatient at the stoppages, he and his batman tried the overland route. Two shots met them, for the snipers were waiting for these targets: the first hit the Colonel in the neck; the second whipped the helmet off his batman. At another point a party of stretcher-bearers with a bad stretcher case attempted to go over the open, thinking their Red Cross would protect them. But not so; bullets whistled around them, and they were fortunate that not one of the party was hit. To add to the confusion rain began to fall heavily, and the men floundered about in the slime.

The company eventually reached the junction of the main trenches, and here a party was detailed to go for water. This meant an immediate return along that congested, slimy, horrible communication trench. Major G. P. Westmacott, D.S.O., arrived to lead the battalion in the new attack timed for 2 p.m., but the attack was cancelled by later order. Instead, he led a weary, mudstained party away from the line at 6 p.m. This was all that remained of the 9th Northumberland Fusiliers. Through the mud and rain the survivors trailed on their way to Méaulte, resting once on the way to get their first hot drink for several days. That rum-laced tea was nectar.

All were soaked to the skin, hungry and very tired. One man flopped down in the barn, his back resting against the wall. Patiently he waited for his evening meal: drowsiness won, and he slept. When he awoke, his meal was alongside of him, but it was his breakfast! His friends had tried to rouse him, finally they had to leave him to sleep. Next morning the man with the driest clothes was our Rip Van Winkle—but he was also the stiffest!



BATTLE OF THE SOMME, 1916.

[Facing p. 40.]

CHAPTER VII

THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME—AND REST: JULY 1916—OCTOBER 1916

THE battalion rested on 8th July in Méaulte while the sad reckoning was carried out. These roll calls after an engagement were heartbreaking ceremonies—the realization of gaps that could not be filled. Evidence was heard, but only too often was a man reported “missing.” His fate was unknown; in many cases it will never be known. The weather was fine and warm, and at 4.30 p.m. the march was continued to Ville-sous-Corbie, and the troops rested here on the 9th. Early on the 10th the battalion entrained at Méricourt Station, and, after a slow journey on the crowded railway, detrained at 3 p.m. at Ailly-sur-Somme. Thence the march to Riencourt was heavy, and the men were thankful to be in billets at 8 p.m.

The battle continued, and by the morning of 14th July the position had been advanced. Contalmaison and Mametz Wood had both been captured after more strenuous fighting and more heavy losses: and Bernafay Wood and part of Trônes Wood were in British hands. The next phase of the attack was timed for 14th July, while the 9th Battalion was quietly resting almost out of the sound of guns, and at the end of that day Trônes Wood, the southern edge of Delville Wood, the edge of High Wood, and Bazentin-le-Petit were gained, in places an advance of over a mile.

The battalion, however, while these operations continued was more concerned with the “rest” period. On the 12th a special wire from the Corps Commander was received, congratulating the Division on its fighting. Later Major-General T. D. Pilcher, C.B., an old “Fifth” officer, bade farewell to the battalion on relinquishing command of the 17th Division. There was one story that the General was fond of relating. During the Somme battle he had come across a private of the 9th wearily resting on his rifle.

“What unit are you?”

“9th N.F., sir.”

“What are you doing here?”

“Waiting, sir.”

"Waiting for what?"

"Waiting till this — war is over!"

The Division parted with a fine leader, and the 9th Battalion lost a good friend when General Pilcher vacated the command.

The 15th July found the battalion making an early start on the road, réveillé at 4.30 a.m., parade at 6 a.m. The day grew warmer and warmer, and the hourly halts were very welcome; only the start after the ten minutes' rest found feet very sore, but the weariness passed. Shoulders ached, and tired troops pulled themselves together to march, at 2 p.m., into Vauchelles-les-Domarts. This was the first anniversary of the landing in France—and what a year it had been. While at Vauchelles the first big draft of new men arrived, fresh from England. It was now our turn to tell the tale, and surely our mentors, the 1st Battalion, never told us such yarns as we told the newcomers!

Then began the task of assimilating the draft, and getting into fighting trim, for another visit to the Somme was likely. On Sunday, the 23rd July, the battalion marched to Hangest-sur-Somme and returned to Méricourt Station. Thence the troops marched to a field about a mile and a half from Dernancourt, and spent several days in bivouacs. On the 26th, Lieutenant-Colonel Bryan, C.M.G. vacated the command of the battalion, and was succeeded by Major G. P. Westmacott, D.S.O., who was promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel. There was a Divisional parade on that date, the new Commander, Major-General P. R. Robertson, C.M.G., inspecting the troops.

The training period in bivouacs was accompanied by fine weather, but the "rest" was not long continued. At 3.30 a.m. on the 1st August the battalion was roused, and at 5 a.m. took to the road and arrived at Fricourt. Here the old procedure was followed, obtaining extra ammunition, bombs, etc.; this was known as "Drawing Table 'A.'" If "Table B" or "Table C" were any heavier, thank goodness we never had to draw them! After receiving the necessary cargoes the troops moved forward at intervals the whole long, hot day. At one part of the journey we came under fire of some obviously heavy guns, as the shells were the largest we had ever heard. We did not see the shells—but there was no mistaking their advent: by the time the shell landed there wasn't a human being visible on the landscape. After the explosion every shell-hole, ditch or old trench seemed to vomit grinning soldiers. "Where did that one—?"

There was some real team-riding during one of the halts. Gun-teams and ammunition columns tore down the road to escape these

huge shells, daring riding brilliantly executed. The driver of a Red Cross car, not to be outdone, made a dash for safety, and escaped without further injury to his load of wounded, though the canvas sides of the ambulance were ripped. Our march continued over vales and ridges, terrain recently won from the enemy. It was a crowded area, troops, guns, gun-teams, dressing-stations in course of erection, new trenches and earthworks being constructed. Field-guns were standing in the open, without shelter or camouflage, firing rapidly; and we felt sympathetic towards the exposed gunners. We had not always been so! Eventually we reached an old communication trench, a derelict thing that had lost its shape in the battle. It afforded some cover from shell splinters, but picture heavily-laden troops, with extra picks and shovels, petrol cans of water in addition to "Table A," trying to get along this disreputable slit in the earth. There was the usual duck-board that immediately tipped up when you stood on one end of it; there was the gap where no duck-board was; there was the usual maze of telegraph wires to catch your feet, or become entangled in the foresight of your rifle. In short it had all the miserable characteristics of a trench that had received too much buffeting.

It was re-christened many times with various pungent names ere the men, in the darkness, scrambled out and risked the overland route. After being up about twenty-one hours of the twenty-four, and being nearly nineteen on the road, the battalion eventually reached the trenches between High Wood and Delville Wood, "B" Company being in "Pont Street." The relieved 15th Royal Warwicks had no regrets on vacating the spot. Sentries were posted in pairs, and, until daybreak, the duty was one hour on, one hour off.

Shelling had not ceased; and, in fact, all day on the 2nd August the bombardment was heavy. Despite the heat the men alternated their sentry duty with hefty digging to ensure more protection from the shell fragments. The following quotation from the diary of a man actually in the trench will prove illuminating: "Shelling very heavy all day. Worked hard all day in fearful heat trying to make some impression on the hard stony ground with a view to getting cover from flying pieces. Day's meals: breakfast, piece dry bread with marmalade; dinner, piece dry bread and marmalade; tea, piece dry bread and marmalade. Taken with a little water." It was a difficult task to get rations up, and water was exceptionally scarce. As the bully-beef was salty, and the water supply so scant, no one dared to tackle the meat.

The 3rd August was as the day before, and here it will be well to consider briefly the position. Round Delville Wood the fighting had been continuous. On the 18th July the enemy had counter-attacked in force, and had regained most of the Wood and part of Longueval. A footing in High Wood was gained by the 33rd Division on the 20th July. Heavy counter-attacks from Delville Wood and in and around High Wood took place on the 24th July, and on the 27th the 2nd Division regained the whole of Delville Wood. Guillemont ruins, a veritable hot-bed of machine-gun emplacements, cunningly sited, held up the progress of the British on the right of Delville Wood, and the respite so gained gave the enemy a chance to reorganize. He had recovered considerably from the first shocks of July, and he proceeded to demonstrate his fitness.

During the afternoon of the 3rd August orders were received to attack at night, but the enemy bombardment about 10 p.m. was so intense that it appeared as though he were preparing to counter-attack in force. It was certainly the heaviest barrage yet encountered by the 9th Battalion. The men lined the fire-step in readiness, but no enemy appeared, and the firing slackened to occasional heavy shells falling at intervals. One of these fell on the back of the trench, just at Company Headquarters. Captain E. M. Jackson was wounded, his batman killed, and Sergeant Poulton, who was Acting Company Sergeant-Major, was so badly wounded that he died a few days later at the Casualty Clearing Station at Heilly. This was a sad loss.

Imagine the situation! We were due to go over the top within a few minutes; the Captain and Sergeant-Major were both out of action. Orders had not been too clear—they seldom were on the Somme. Confusion was the key-note of many attacks; and reference to German histories shows that the confusion was even greater on their side of that unknown territory called No Man's Land. The exact location of the enemy lines was unknown; the direction of the attack was therefore vague. Lieutenant H. E. Woods took command of the troops; a few rapid orders were given, the situation outlined as clearly as it could be in the lack of definite information, and the attack began. As happened only too frequently in the chaos of battle, troops lost direction, became mingled in the frightful darkness, were shattered by enemy fire, and the few effectives left in action were powerless to advance. We were mixed up with the 12th Manchesters, the attack never had a chance from the first moment, and soon the remnants of the troops were back in the forward assembly trench. At 8 a.m.,

orders were received to return to the starting point of the night before. Weary men almost blindly stumbled into the trench, and, amidst the heavy shelling, slept as if on feather beds.

The position was easier during the 5th, but to add to our manifold troubles our own "heavies" began to drop shells about our trenches. One shell caused heavy casualties, and an urgent appeal was sent to the battery, and an observation officer came up hurriedly. The battery had been ranging on our trench, an uncomfortable proof of the vagueness existing as to the details in this mighty battle. During the night of the 5th/6th August we were relieved by the 6th Dorsets during a terrific artillery duel, during which our new method of machine-gun barrage was tried for the first time. The relief began with a dash in single file over the open for several hundred yards, with shells falling all around. It was marvellous how the troops escaped casualties so well. After a hard trek, harried by shell-fire, the battalion reached Pommier Redoubt, well behind the line. Here the cooks and field kitchens awaited the men who then got their first hot meal for several days.

It appeared to be a safe spot, but about midnight on the 7th the enemy raked the trenches from end to end and caused many casualties. Next day we left this place, and went into bivouacs in a little valley near Fricourt. After a couple of nights here, the battalion again paraded for the line to relieve the 7th Lincolns in Delville Wood. Fighting about this wood was still fierce; the place itself hardly looked like a wood, a mere collection of riven stumps of what had once been fine trees. There had been no time to clear the ground, and, in the chaos of the battlefield, the dead, friend and foe, lay about just as they had fallen. The Wood and Longueval were constantly swept by shell-fire, and owing to the tree roots only shallow trenches could be dug. For three days the battalion stuck it, being relieved on the 12th/13th by the 10th Durham Light Infantry of the 43rd Brigade. Shell-storms accompanied the relief, and it was with a sigh of thanksgiving that the men got back to Pommier Redoubt and found the cooks ready with hot tea and rum.

During this tour it had been reported that the enemy had withdrawn a considerable distance from the wood. Immediately on taking over, "B" Company was ordered to push out a Lewis-gun Section and a Bombing Section about two hundred yards, and dig in. This advanced post experienced fusillade after fusillade —grim incentives to the process of digging. When dawn lit up the dismal scene, the devoted men found to their surprise that

they were within twenty-five yards of the enemy. Bombing and sniping filled their day. They had many fortunate escapes; but their greatest was on relief: for the newcomers from the 10th Durhams were captured almost immediately after taking over!

The troops rested at Pommier Redoubt from 4 a.m. to 7 p.m. on the 13th August, and then went into bivouacs at the side of the Albert-Amiens road near Dernancourt. On the 15th, the battalion marched to Méricourt and entrained at 8 p.m. for Candas, detrained in the early hours and marched to Fienvillers. At 2 p.m. on the 17th we again moved by road to billets at Grouches Luchuel. Two days later we moved into Brigade Reserve at Souastre. Here we rested for a week, a much needed rest, and on the 27th moved on to Fonquevillers. The trenches were taken over on the 28th, and such trenches! Reliefs were carried out in broad daylight; hardly a shot was fired, but we only got three weeks of this "rest cure," for on the 21st September we were on the road again.

Briefly the itinerary was: Mondicourt on the 21st, Barly 22nd, Heirmont 23rd, Millencourt 24th. Here at Millencourt we were in Divisional rest. Billeted in airy barns we spent fifteen good days, the people being very friendly. We had some good times, and were sorry indeed when, on the 9th October, we started on the touring stunt again, staying at Conteville overnight, and on to Barly on the 10th, thence to Mondicourt on the 11th. Here, in miserable billets in miserable weather we spent a week, and were glad to move, on the 19th, to le Souich. On the 22nd, a Sunday, *réveillé* was at 4 a.m. for we were under orders to embus at 6 a.m. The transport and cookers had gone on early, but the troops waited and waited in the cold for buses which did not arrive until 11 p.m. After about a three hours' journey we were "debussed" only to find that there was a two-hour tramp in front of us. At 4 a.m. we reached Coisy after this delightful bit of staff work! Hardly had the troops settled in when they were called out again at 6.30 a.m. to take to the road once more. What a different "B" Company it was from that which had stayed there three months earlier!

About 3.30 p.m. we reached billets at Daours, and stayed there until the 27th, when the battalion paraded at 7 a.m., only to stand for an hour at the starting point. There was another long weary march, each mile bringing us nearer to the dreaded Somme battle-field again. It was well after dark when the troops settled in a canvas camp, known as Sand-pits Camp near Méaulte. The weather had changed, and rain fell in torrents; tent ropes have

an objectionable habit of tripping people up, and soldiers have a habit of saying what they think about it. Such were the epithets that flew about in Sand-pits Camp. It really was muddy there; it really deserved all that it was called.

On the 30th October, a move forward was made to "D" Camp near Bernafay Wood. To do this short trip of about five miles the troops were on the road for nearly eleven hours. Every inch of the way was packed with transport of all sorts all trying to force their way along an almost impassable road. Some sections of the low-lying roads were under two feet of water, and under this water lurked hidden shell-holes. Into these men disappeared, to reappear wet, oh yes, wet, but really no wetter than their miserable comrades who hadn't fallen in! All along the route Labour battalions worked to drain the place, a mighty struggle against the elements. These Labour battalions were composed of men unfit for the hardship of infantry work, and were officered by men who had been through the mill and were supposed to have light jobs. It appeared to be a job that the hardiest of fit men could not survive, but these "unfits" did their bit, and seemed to thrive on it.

Having at long last arrived at the so-called "D Camp," we found the usual sea of mud, but no tents, and were dismissed to find what shelter we could. In the black darkness and pouring rain, men stumbled about. Here a pile of blankets would be found dumped in the mud and covered by a tarpaulin. These were promptly commandeered, the tarpaulin likewise, and some few found shelter. There an old battered, leaking dug-out gave room to another party. Fires were started somehow, only to be stamped out as the Boche planes droned overhead. On Friday, the 31st October, no rations arrived until after "dinner-time": there was a scramble. Another miserable night ensued.

Under these conditions a long, straggling line of infantry, slipping and falling, getting up and struggling on, wading knee-deep in mud and water mile after mile, made their way to the trenches. Yet no man dropped out. At this time the line, at terrific cost to both sides, had been advanced by the British, slowly, and fiercely. Guillemont was stormed early in September, Ginchy on the 9th, Thiepval on the 27th, and subsequent minor operations, much hindered by the weather, had pushed the line through Gueudecourt, Les Boeufs, Morval and Combles.

The state of the terrain is indicated in the following extract from the diary of a man who attempted to join the battalion after leaving the transport lines:

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"—and I went ahead to find the camp in Trônes Wood. We reached the Wood about 8 p.m. The roads were in an awful condition. We soon got soaked to the skin, and felt pretty dicky as we had had nothing to eat all day. The Wood was in a far worse condition than the roads. No one in the Wood could give us any idea as to where the Camp was. We walked about the Wood looking for the Camp until we were dead beat, and then found an empty dug-out which was nearly flooded out, but as there was a floorboard floating about the dug-out we decided to try to get a few hours rest on it until daylight before trying once more to find the Camp.

"We had been dozing for a little while when — discovered that the water was coming up through the waterproof sheets and that we were wetter even than we had been before we lay down. We struck a light and gazed at each other until the laughs came. Then we decided to clear out and walk round again, but without any better luck, so we settled down to roost outside the remnants of an old cook-house and waited there until daylight."

CHAPTER VIII

THE SOMME AGAIN—AND TRAINING: NOVEMBER 1916—MARCH 1917

THE Battle of the Somme was concluding. Rain, the saviour of the enemy right through this bloody struggle—German soldiers referred to it as “the blood bath”—had made conditions impossible. There could be no action on the mighty scale of July—October, but the line had to be adjusted. The Higher Command had a big scheme in hand for the Beaumont Hamel area, but the enemy right along the front was to be harried and kept on the defensive. Time after time the full projects of General Headquarters had been almost realized; the enemy was confessedly beaten; he was only saved by the weather conditions.

On the 1st November the battalion relieved the 12th Manchesters in the line between Guedecourt and Les Boeufs, opposite Le Transloy. The parade was at 3 p.m., the guides mistook the way in the sea of mud, and it was not until 10 p.m. that the companies reached the trenches. Machine-guns had to be carried, as no transport could travel. Puttees were not worn, as a precaution against trench feet. Conditions continued bad, the nights being especially cold.

The Border Regiment on the right carried out a neat little attack on the 2nd, capturing Zenith Trench. Next day the enemy retaliated on our immediate right, attacking the 7th Lincolns. This raid was repulsed, flanking fire from the 9th Battalion assisting in the discomfiture of the invaders. The 10th Lancashire Fusiliers took up the attacking, but the men were up to their knees in mud and made no progress. The intended counter-attack on the 7th Lincolns was first observed by one of our sentries, who reported to the nearest officer. He, in turn, reported to Battalion Headquarters, where pigeons were released. Within eleven minutes of the first observation the artillery was on the target, a fine piece of rapid work.

Relief by the 10th Manchesters came on the 4th November, and again the guides went astray. The company was drenched;

the heavy going made progress slow, and altogether it was a miserable journey. However, the huts in Carnoy were comfortable, and our diarist paid due compliment in a short phrase: "Home from home." Two days were spent in this camp, and on the 7th the battalion again relieved the 12th Manchesters. The conditions were very bad, and the barrages laid down by the enemy added to the misery. Wading through mud to the accompaniment of shell-showers was enough to test the endurance of any man. It was a welcome relief on the 10th November when the battalion moved back to the hutments at Carnoy.

More huts were occupied the following day, and on the 12th the battalion marched to the tented camp at the Citadel. Here a brief respite was permitted, but on the 14th November the battalion entrained at Dernancourt for Hangest. From huts to tents, from tents to bivouacs in November was a step-down performance, not at all appreciated, but better luck was in store, for the battalion marched to billets at Breilly, and remained there until the 11th December. This was a welcome respite from the dismal mud and continual floundering of the Somme battlefield. Training occupied the period, and hopes were high that the last view had been taken of the "Sea of mud."

It was not to be. The battalion moved to billets in Longpré on the 12th, entrained there at 8 a.m. next day, detrained at Edgehill Station and occupied billets in Méaulte. The next week was spent in further training, and the optimistic hoped for Christmas Day in billets. There was no such luck for the "P.B.I."; for on the 22nd the battalion marched to Carnoy; thence, next day, to Guillemont Camp, and on Christmas Eve relieved the 10th King's Royal Rifle Corps (20th Division) in the front line between Les Boeufs and Morval.

Christmas Day in the trenches was celebrated by both sides indulging in a playful artillery duel. Some gay warriors sang carols just to keep in form; "Peace on earth——" while the shells screamed and crashed, horribly out of tune. It was another little incongruity.

Matters had settled down to ordinary trench routine, but things were by no means quiet: far from it. Conditions were simply atrocious in that "abomination of desolation." Square miles of devastation had been wrested from the enemy, at frightful cost to him and to us; the soil had been churned time and again by hurricanes of shells. Trenches there were, but they were waterlogged. Routes to the front were rough, slimy, and fetid; of habitation there was no sign, but a few pulverized bricks

denoted where houses had once been. In some places the very foundations no longer existed.

It was marvellous how the guides, on such short acquaintance with the area, managed so well. A false step, and a man would be chest deep in the cold, slimy water. One of a fatigue party laden with trench stores did drop into a hole, and was only saved by the expedient of putting a stretcher over the hole, and the rescue party, four in number, hauling him out.

This was underfoot, or should have been, only feet sank into the horrible slime. Overhead, the conditions were usually bad. During this period of trench routine, especially when in the sector east of Combles, there was not sufficient time during the reserve period to dry and clean the clothes properly, and the men were provided with a complete "rig-out." This happened four times during a space of three weeks, a fact amply indicative of the environment.

The battalion was relieved at 1.45 a.m. on the 27th by the 10th Lancashire Fusiliers, and took over Camp 19 at Carnoy. Two days later, Guillemont Camp was occupied, and next day the battalion relieved the 7th Lincolns at Morval trenches. New Year's Day was spent in the front line—the battalion had no luck during this festive season—relief by the 10th Lancashire Fusiliers not taking place until that night. Back the men trudged to Carnoy Camp, moved on the 4th January to Guillemont Camp, and next day relieved the Lincolns in the line at Morval. An enemy working party in No Man's Land was rudely disturbed during this tour, many casualties being inflicted.

We were relieved on the 8th, spent four days in the old camp at Carnoy, cleaned up, moved to Guillemont next day, and took over from the Lincolns. This time there was a slight variation, the sector being Sainly-Saillisel, and a hint of further change was the relief on the 15th by the 1st Lancashire Fusiliers (29th Division). Hopes this time were justified, for after a night spent at Carnoy, the battalion entrained at Plateau Station, detrained at Corbie, and took over billets at La Neuville, on the outskirts of that town.

The trip to Corbie was actually in open trucks. Some hardy men tried to coax fires in punctured coal-buckets, *alias brasiers*; they got more smoke than heat. A four hours trip in an open truck on a bitterly cold night was not the height of luxury. Even the "40 hommes ou 8 chevaux" had roofs. Then the billets were bad, leaky, draughty barns for the most part. Here, in the farms, the old trouble of chained-up water-pumps was met with,

and caused some differences with the farm people. Anyhow, water was not much sought after, for shaving in iced water has little to recommend it.

It was a respite from the monotony of trench life, and was a change; that was all. Corbie offered sundry attractions, and, at any rate, there were other humans there. It was quite possible to be "fed-up," as one soldier remarked, "absolutely fed-up with the sight of your own pals." Ten depressing days were spent at this place, before the battalion returned to the battlefield, by train and route march, on the 28th January, taking over hutments at Bronfay Camp. At the end of the month the battalion marched to Bouleaux Wood, and at night relieved the 7th Lincolns at North Copse, between Morval and Sainly-Saillisel.

Relief was carried out on the 2nd February by the 8th South Staffords and the battalion returned to Bronfay Camp, the next tour in the line being four days later. A very successful attack was made by the 7th Yorkshires on our right, and an amusing little incident occurred on the front of the 9th Battalion. The company stretcher-bearers, six men, held a post on the left of "B" Company. There was an interval of about one hundred and twenty yards to the posts on either side; and the only ammunition amongst the party was one Mills grenade left there by previous occupants. Relief of this post was delayed for twenty-four hours, and in the wintry weather the party fared on cold water, biscuits, and bully beef. Next night a member from the post on their right dashed along and said that a party of Germans was approaching at the double. A hurried search was made for weapons, but the only additions to the Mills grenade were two shovels. "Never mind, boys, let the —— come; we'll give 'em a hot time in the open!"

A little variety was added to the relief on the 8th February, for the battalion spent the night in dug-outs at Combles; then moved on to Bronfay Camp, once more taking over the line on the 12th. During this day Lieutenant-Colonel Morris, D.S.O., took command of the battalion, but his stay was short, as on the 15th he left to take over the 7th Yorkshires. Major Allen, M.C., then commanded the 9th. The condition of the trenches was so bad that the time in the line was reduced to two days, four days being spent in reserve.

An experiment was tried during one tour on this front. Casualties had been severe owing to "trench feet," and "B" Company was sent in without great-coats or puttees. Ground sheets served as capes, but the experiment was a success. Under

these Spartan conditions the men of "B" Company appeared to flourish, and no feet suffered. Some of the other men had suffered badly from this trouble, and amongst the serious cases was one man who had to be evacuated. The Medical Officer gave instructions to his orderly, who went to the hut, and despatched the wrong man. Two days later this individual was comfortably in Blighty, whither he was followed later by the right man.

This Sailly-Saillisel front was peculiar. There was, from the half-way camp, a long communication trench, about six hundred yards of mud, water, and débris. Then the troops carried on for about two thousand yards on a duck-board track that meandered about the countryside, sited originally, maybe, for cover. Yet, one moonlight night, men of the 9th watched their relief coming up. For over two hours they were in view from the front line filing about like the mazes of a country dance. They must have been seen by the enemy, but he left them alone in their moonlight promenade.

During the middle of February the temperature was decidedly low; the mercury seemed incapable of rising. Probably that was the coldest spell experienced in France, and its effect on the environment can be imagined. The ration loaves, in the journey up, were undergoing sundry changes; and many a good knife was spoilt in lengthy endeavours to hack them up sectionally!

The last spell in the line was on the 18th February, the battalion being relieved early on the 20th by the 2nd South Wales Borderers. A few hours were spent at Bronfay Camp, then the troops entrained at Plateau Station for Heilly, marching thence to billets at Franvillers. Here Lieutenant-Colonel A. W. Blockley took over command of the battalion, which spent the remainder of the month training.

The first day of March was passed in a short move to Contay, where the billets were quite good. The surroundings were cheerful, untouched by the devastation. More training, and still more, with the men guessing where the next "push" was to be. This intensive work was not done solely to give the men an appetite for omelettes, or a thirst for *vin blanc*. On the 13th, the route was north to Beauval, and the following day to Bouquemaison. It is not reported how many managed to slip into Doullens during the short stay south, then north, of that inviting town. The battalion moved on to Quœux and Erquières ("A" and "B" Companies), and stayed there from the 15th to the 21st March, training. All were keenly interested in the German retreat to

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the Hindenburg Line—a sort of intellectual interest, undisturbed by fighting, reliefs, and the spirit of the chase!

A change was ordained on the 22nd; the battalion marched to Frohen-le-Grand, and next day went on to billets at Sus-St. Leger. Training continued, and by this time it was an open secret, summed up in the one word—Arras. Though the 17th Division was not called upon to bear the glory of the first attacks in the Battle of Arras, a brief description of the objects and attainments is necessary to follow subsequent moves.

The object of Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig was to attack the enemy on both shoulders of the salient between the Scarpe and the Ancre, the Fifth Army operating on the Ancre front, the Third Army about Arras. Vimy Ridge was included, and it was intended to rob the enemy of the advantages of observation which he had held since May, 1915. In the Arras area the German front line system consisted of four successive lines of trenches, the rearmost of which was known as the Black Line. Behind that system was the Blue Line, a single trench system with odd bits of defensive works; in rear of this line (some one thousand three hundred yards eastward) was a double-trench defence called the Brown Line.

All of these lines had to be taken, and a new trench, to be known as the Green Line, dug by the evening of the first day of attack. This proposed trench would have been sited west of Bailleul, to give observation over the Vendin Line, a second Hindenburg Line in this area. Preparations had been made on the same colossal scale as for the Battle of the Somme, and advantage had been taken of the wonderful array of underground quarries and cellars in Arras to stage the troops for battle. Guns had been massed, and the bombardment began three weeks before the assault was timed to be launched. This shell-fire had varied in intensity, different hours each day seeing a crescendo to delude the enemy into the belief that the attack was beginning. Gas was projected copiously; in short, Fritz was presented with outsize doses of all the man-slaying ingenuities of modern fighting. Aeroplanes watched his sufferings, and coolly reported, the while augmenting his discomfiture.

CHAPTER IX

THE BATTLE OF ARRAS : APRIL 1917—JULY 1917

THE 9th Battalion was resting at Sus St. Leger, and stayed there until the 5th April, then moving to Houvin-Houvigneul. Two days later, the march was continued to Liencourt, thence, next day, to Simencourt.

At 5.30 a.m., the 9th April, the roar of the guns seemed, if that were possible, to intensify. The lessons, bitterly learnt on the Somme, were utilized for the new attack. Mist shrouded the arena, and rain threatened; the persistent ill-luck of contrary weather still shadowed the moves of the British. In many places the first assaults were supremely successful. While this advance was continuing the 9th Battalion had left Simencourt and was moving to the district near Arras. Snow fell, and the weather was very cold; in the uncertainty of the position the battalion was kept in the open until nearly midnight. At last dug-outs in the old front line were occupied; these were quite comfortable.

Next morning snow was falling heavily; word was received that the attack was going splendidly, and the men settled down to wait. Stocks of rations were found, left by the forward troops, and soon there were merry parties round heaps of luxuries, such as maconochies, bully beef, biscuits, marmalade, tea, and coffee. Fires were lit in the open, and the rumours were to the effect that the cavalry was moving forward, and the 9th was to follow on.

During the wait the Divisional field-guns were moving forward with difficulty; frequently they were axle deep in the mud. Men and horses were tired, so the troops found some strong ropes, fastened them to the guns, and with a "Heave ho, boys," helped the artillery. These acts were common enough, and, in the stress of battle, the genial thanks were always voiced. The battalion did not go forward, but moved back into billets at Arras.

The weather on the 11th was again bad; the cavalry could not advance. It was disappointing that such ill-luck hampered the schemes of General Headquarters and spoilt the magnificence of the attacks. The battalion paraded at 5 p.m., and in the sleet

and snow moved up to support the 50th Brigade. Progress on the march was slow due to the traffic blocks, but finally the troops occupied the Brown Line at about 1.30 a.m. 12th April. There they remained all day, making themselves comfortable despite the falls of snow and the fairly heavy bombardment of the line.

No forward move was made by the battalion on the 13th, but at 10 p.m. next day a move was made to relieve the West Yorkshires in the front line round Monchy-le-Preux. The relief was completed by 5 a.m. on the 15th, and the men dug-in while yet it was dark. Rain fell heavily, and the temperature was still low. Hardly had the job been finished when orders arrived for the battalion to move forward, and dig-in again. The enemy was fairly quiet. Monchy-le-Preux had been the scene of hard fighting on the 11th, and was captured by the 37th Division in co-operation with the 3rd Cavalry Division. Much more ground would have been won had the weather permitted even the normal forward movement of the guns. Artillery support was lacking to drive the assault through after the gaining of the initial successes. The capture of Vimy Ridge by the Canadians and other troops had had the expected result—a withdrawal by the enemy from the areas overlooked by the Ridge.

The main effort of the enemy at this time when the 9th Battalion was at "Monchy" was directed against the Australian Corps near Lagnicourt, but on the 15th Fritz was, generally speaking, quiet. Next day our Allies launched their great attack on the Aisne, and, the weather improving, the next move on the Arras front was timed for the 21st April, but another break in the weather postponed that attack until St. George's Day. Meanwhile the 9th Battalion had had a comparatively quiet time, moving forward and digging-in. Some good Lewis-gun practice was obtained on scurrying Huns during the 16th. The battalion was relieved by the Manchesters on the 18th, and found the journey back very heavy. The ground was churned and sodden, and most of the men were dead beat with the trek, only the shells kept them going. A halt was called in some trenches, and the men drew overcoats and set off along the railway to Arras. Billets, in the cellars, had stone floors, were cold and dismal, but they were dry. The Quartermaster had the post ready; most of the men had parcels, and soon the cellars were turned into miniature restaurants. Then followed a good sleep.

Cleaning up was the programme for the 19th, and at 2 p.m. next day the men paraded for the Brown Line again. Things were fairly quiet, and, twenty-four hours later, the battalion

occupied the same trenches in front of Monchy-le-Preux. The weather was cold, but there was not much variation from the previous tour. Yet there were rumours of a big attack on the morrow (21st). It was really remarkable how these rumours began; unfortunately, in many cases, they were too near the truth for comfort. "A captured soldier stated—" such was an ominous extract from the Intelligence Summary!

The attack did not take place on the 21st; the 22nd passed quietly; St. George's Day arrived, and the roses adorned the shrapnel helmets. One correspondent wrote that "it was the last flower several Huns gazed on in this world. Hot-house plants are more in their line now." The general scheme was an attack on a front of nine miles from Croisilles to Gavrelle. Rapid progress was made, and despite stubborn resistance by the enemy, the evening of the 24th April saw the British in possession of Guémappe, Gavrelle, the high ground overlooking Chérisy, more land east of Monchy-le-Preux, and a footing on the outskirts of Roeux.

The 9th Battalion was in touch on their right with the 29th Division east of Monchy. Very early in the morning Second-Lieutenant Aikman was giving instructions to his platoon when a shell burst near. A small splinter penetrated his heart, for he dropped dead into the arms of his men. Another officer, Second-Lieutenant Hilton, took over, and just before zero hour the mail arrived. What a scramble there was for letters and parcels. Hardly had they been grabbed when over the top went the company in the good old style. Disaster followed; our own guns barraged the line we were just leaving, and many men were knocked out. Very few were hit during the actual advance, and the men found it one of the easiest attacks, as well as one of the liveliest. The objective was gained, and the enemy did not wait to dispute the entry. He bolted down one of his saps and refused to come up again. Thereupon someone threw some Mills grenades down to keep him company. The men dug-in very rapidly as they did not like the trench they had just captured. "They were more like valleys than anything else. Horses and carts could have got along the trench." The 9th at once began to make them look like real trenches. It was a glorious little affair, excellently carried out; truly a perfect setting for St. George's Day celebrations. The enemy tried a counter-attack, but the rifle fire was too hot for him.

While the troops were in this forward area there was some difficulty in reaching them with rations. By 4 p.m. these were

all neatly put up in packs, loaded into limbers and away from Headquarters in Arras, winding through streets into the open country and on to the canal. The rations were transferred to barges, and as the Hun was dotting the area with shells no one stopped to yarn; even the latest from the Sergeants' Mess had to be bottled up for a more restful time. The parties scrambled aboard and cast off, only to be held up farther on by an obviously emergency bridge that must have been thrown across when shell-fire was rather concentrated. It was not a High Level Bridge, nor yet a Swing Bridge, though, like the latter, it was somewhat accommodating. Its structure gave to the persuasion of the barge —some of the timbers yielding rather noisily, though the noise was partly drowned by the occasional shells that marked the canal course.

The point of debarkation raised a neat question. On which side of the canal was the dump to be? As both sides were equally bad for landing, the star-board side was chosen; this was Athies by name, but a hot-bed of artillery by design. Packed together as in an ordnance shop these monsters stood; and Fritz-over-the-way evidently knew it to his cost, for he lobbed his shells into Athies in a vain attempt to keep pace with our firing. Across the canal was a sandbagged house, whereby another ration party with pack mules was waiting. The Hun got a direct hit on the house, and when the smoke cleared away there were dead mules, and already the stretcher-bearers were busy.

After hanging about for nearly an hour in this all-too-lively rendezvous, the ration party became restive, and was only pacified by the appearance of the pack-mules and drivers. One mule objected, shook off its load, and disappeared to find "a better 'ole." Another very early on found a worse one, for it toppled into a shell-hole full of water, its head only protruding. Its load was taken off, and the drivers attempted to haul the mule out: result—nil. Some stout gunners lent aid and some ropes; but the mule continued to blink in a blasé manner. Certainly it made no move. Finally even the Transport Sergeant gave it up after exhausting his repertoire of kind words, and the Transport Officer prepared to shoot the animal and end its misery. The gunners stood by, the drivers stood to their mules, and the Transport Officer drew his revolver. With effortless ease the mule came out of that shell-hole and shook itself, while the spectators gasped. For a while, even the Transport Sergeant was speechless; then he reiterated his repertoire of kind words.

The way continued in single file for miles over shell-swept

open country, until the rations were dumped into the charge of a battalion ration party. The "quarter-blokes" then returned to Arras, travelling on land all the way. Another surprise awaited them, for the loadless truant mule awaited their return! This journey by road was vastly shorter than the canal route, and proved to be infinitely safer. But then, why have a nice canal and not use it?

It was hoped that a short spell of rest would be accorded the battalion when it came out; and things seemed to tend that way, for on the 26th April the troops entrained for Saulty, then marched about seven miles to Ivergnny. Billets were good, but hopes were shattered, for hardly had the men time to clean themselves up than they were off again to the battle zone.

The battalion embussed at the cross-roads between Ivergnny and Sus-St. Leger and journeyed to Laresset, a small village about five miles west of Arras. Next day, a march brought the troops to tents and bivouacs at St. Nicholas. The Battle of Arras had settled down; it was necessary to keep active, and by means of wide attacks with shallow objectives, to keep the enemy pinned to the front, so as to aid the French on the Chemin des Dames. Over sixty square miles had been won, nearly 20,000 prisoners and 250 guns taken, and the menace of Vimy Ridge removed. Had the weather been better— However, the 9th returned to the line on the 3rd May, quite prepared to carry on the good work.

The period 3rd/9th May was spent quietly enough in the Brown Line and the Black Line. Then followed a move to the Green Line to relieve a battalion of King's Own Scottish Borderers (9th Division), and on the 12th the 9th Battalion relieved the 9th West Ridings in the front line (Conrad Trench). There was heavy firing on both sides, the angry aftermath of a stubborn battle. The 10th Lancashire Fusiliers carried out a surprise attack during the night. Reliefs were carried out normally, the only break of any import being a very successful raid on Wit Trench at 1.30 a.m. on the 23rd by Second-Lieutenant E. G. Bates and twenty men of "C" Company. It was a useful scrap, and resulted in the leader receiving the Military Cross. Later, while in the camp at St. Nicholas, a letter was read to the men from the Brigadier-General congratulating the Commanding Officer and all ranks on their exploits being mentioned in the Field-Marshal's despatches.

This had been a lengthy spell in the front line, and rest had been promised. There had been one "false start" out, but the troops had returned to the battle zone. It was not until the

30th May that the battalion entrained at Arras for Saulty, south-west of Arras, and marched from there to billets at Warluzel. For almost three weeks the change of scene proved a real holiday. Rural France was in her sunniest mood. "What a change after the bare, broken country which we have wrested from the Huns to return to the fresh green of woods and fields, with only the gun flashes at night to remind us that there is a war a few miles away," wrote one officer to the *St. George's Gazette*.

It was rest, in the usual Army sense. There arose some natural grouching at the early parades, with their resemblance to the Indian Army. Fancy parading at 3.30 a.m. and marching to ranges and training areas! The weather was hot, too, and this added to the discomfort, the while streams of subdued eloquence testified to the testiness. The vote of the majority would have been against this unholy early parading. "Rest," yes, but, to quote the genial correspondent, "one must be thankful it has been *rest*, and not intensive training."

Leave allotment was good, and many men got home. The Commanding Officer, too, was amongst the "leavers," his place being taken temporarily by Major D. R. Osborne. Apart from those nightmares of parades, there was plenty of fun, sports and horse-shows, cricket, and even football. Temperature did not matter where this game was concerned. There was a further bright patch in the receipt of news of the granting of several decorations. Captain M. G. Patten and Second-Lieutenant T. Bennett were awarded the M.C., Sergeant D. Hoar and Staff-Sergeant R. Hardman the D.C.M., while Corporal H. Barker, Lance-Corporal J. S. Bennett, Privates G. Brown, W. Nixon and A. McDonald (attached from Royal Army Medical Corps) gained M.M. In addition to these, Captain and Adjutant W. F. Robertson, Lieutenant W. J. Hewson, and Sergeant J. Stafford were "mentioned."

The following paragraphs from the *St. George's Gazette* give an idea of the off-duty engagements:

"Our Battalion Sports were a great success, and were carried on till dark. Quite a representative gathering from other units was present. Honours rested fairly evenly among the companies, but I regret lack of space forbids me to give detailed results. Blindfold drill produced some new movements *not* laid down in the book. Stretcher-bearers looked anxious during the progress of the tugs-of-war, thinking no doubt their well-earned rest was in danger of interruption. Those who saw the high jump consider the winner's performance easily beaten by the joyful leap into the

air of a certain Lieutenant on his company's guard-mounting success.

"I must not conclude without reference to the Battalion Runners' Dinner. This was subscribed to by the officers as some slight tribute and appreciation of the sterling service the runners have always rendered under the most trying and dangerous conditions. The united efforts of the Canteen Staff and Master-Cook produced a menu to which full justice was done, and if those present spent an enjoyable evening our object was achieved. There was no lack of volunteers to guide the reinforcements up in petrol cans."

The battalion sustained a loss by the accident to the popular Medical Officer, Captain A. L. McCready. While sleep-walking he fell out of his bedroom window and badly fractured his leg. The Commanding Officer, too, was ill, and his leave in England was extended to a month.

All good things came to an end in France, as elsewhere, but seemingly more rapidly in France. On the 20th June—how time had sped!—the battalion was transported by buses to St. Nicholas camps, and next day relieved the 25th Northumberlands in the Greenland Hill Sector, east of Arras. This area had seen some lively encounters early in June, when the 9th and 34th Divisions had forced the enemy back, and resisted his counter-attacks. It was a minor operation, excellently performed, but it left the enemy quite resentful. He continued to shell Cuthbert and Charlie and Curly Trenches, and was still at it when the 9th Battalion moved in; but during the tour which ended on the 26th June there was no effort to regain this system.

The battalion rested in reserve in the Railway Cutting, and, on the last day of June, relieved the 10th Lancashire Fusiliers in the Chemical Works Sector (Roeux). This was another sector where the Hun resented our presence, but he was forced, by reason of British activities elsewhere on the front, to be content with customary hates at a distance. Shelling was persistent, trench mortars being in evidence; but his success, or lack of it, is seen in the many nil returns of casualties. In fact, the greatest pests were flies! A minor pest consisted of hordes of young frogs revelling in their emergence from the tadpole stage.

On the 3rd July, the battalion was relieved by the 10th Lancashire Fusiliers, and returned to Railway Cutting, in reserve, and moved four days later to St. Nicholas Camps and bivouacs, spending the time until the 15th in the usual routine training.

That night, the battalion relieved the 7th Lincolns in the front line north of Roeux. Two years had now been spent by the 9th in France, and a correspondent writing to the *St. George's Gazette* amply summed up the position :

"The second anniversary of our arrival in this country was very quietly celebrated while we were out for a few days behind the line. Two years have shown us a lot; we have learned what modern warfare is; we have known many experiences, happy and otherwise. We came out with a reputation to keep up, the traditions of the Fifth to be upheld, and I think, in all humility, we may say we have done so. All ranks have seen changes, drastic changes, from varying causes, and gaps in the ranks and empty seats at Mess tell us what the greatest cause has been. Our contribution to the Roll of Honour has been a lengthy one, and only a small percentage of those splendid lads who stormed the recruiting offices in the early days remain with us yet. Spirit and determination were always the birthright of the battalion, firmly planted in our midst, and with the legacy of the memory of those who died beside us to strengthen it still more so shall we play on till the other side cry 'Enough.' "

The Chemical Works at Roeux had been the scene, too, of fierce hand-to-hand encounters, and on the 19th the battalion used some of the enemy's Minenwerfers against his own trenches. This bit of contempt brought forth next day a heavy artillery and trench-mortar retaliation, but the honours again rested with the 9th. That night at 10.30 Second-Lieutenant W. S. Allen and eighteen men entered the enemy's line, scared Fritz out of it, shot down several, planted bombs in dug-outs and brought back a collection of rifles as evidence. It was a neat affair, and was duly recognized by the award of the Military Cross. His henchmen, too, were not forgotten, for amongst the awards at that time were Sergeant Taylor, bar to Military Medal; Corporal Proctor, Lance-Corporal Clampitt, Privates Bolam and Fisher, Military Medals, while Lance-Corporal Keenan received a Card of Honour; Second-Lieutenant E. S. Hope gained the Military Cross.

The thoroughness of Second-Lieutenant Allen's preparations may be judged from the fact that, just before his fully-instructed men went over with him, he had them paraded, and a complete list of next-of-kin taken! On the return to the trench after the raid it was found that one of his men was missing. At once the officer and a sergeant returned to No Man's Land to hunt for

the missing man : but they were away for a long time. Hearing that Allen was still missing, two officers of "C" Company, Captain Brady and Second-Lieutenant Bates, went out into No Man's Land to hunt the hunters! They had no luck, and after a careful search regretfully returned and reported their lack of success. Imagine their surprise on hearing that Second-Lieutenant Allen had returned to his line, but, on hearing of the search for him, had gone out again to tell the searchers that he was O.K. This little game of blind-man's-buff ended happily, and rounded off a successful night with cheerful grins.

Relief by the 10th Lancashire Fusiliers was accomplished that night, and the return to the line was made on the 24th July, the battalion taking over the Caledonian Sector. Gas shelling was the chief enemy weapon in this area, and there were several casualties, fortunately most of them slight.

The battalion was finally relieved in this sector on the 31st July by the 10th West Yorks, and moved to Lancaster Camp, St. Nicholas, being in Divisional reserve. Two days later the astounding order was received that the battalion was being transferred from the 52nd Brigade, 17th Division, to the 103rd Brigade, 34th Division. It was a sad blow. The 17th Division had looked after us now for nearly three years. With our old friends we had seen many vicissitudes; we were happy with them. The ways of General Headquarters were inscrutable, but doubtless there were good reasons for the re-shuffling of units. A farewell message was read from the General Officer Commanding 17th Division. There were demonstrations of appreciation of the 9th by other units of the Division, but it was a melancholy business saying farewell to our old friends. The speeches made a deep impression ; the severance of such ties hurt more than words could say.

Next day the 9th Battalion marched to Arras, no less than five bands of brother units playing us out. The scene was memorable, a unique expression of regard. Heavy-hearted troops embussed at Arras, and travelled sadly via Bapaume and Péronne to Bouvincourt to join the 34th Division.

CHAPTER X

HARGICOURT AND POELCAPPHELLE: AUGUST 1917—OCTOBER 1917

AFTER taking a leading part in the Arras operations, the 34th Division had been withdrawn to the back areas to refit. The supply of drafts was inadequate, and in the 103rd Brigade two battalions of Northumberland Fusiliers, the 24th and 27th, were amalgamated into one, known as the 24th/27th Battalion. To fill the gap thus created, the 9th Battalion was brought in. Some time previously the 34th Division had been in the area of the Cavalry Corps round Péronne, and on the 10th July took over the Hargicourt Sector from the 4th and 5th Cavalry Divisions, with their right in touch, over the Omignon River, with the French Army. On the left of the 34th Division front was the 35th Division, whose Pioneers were the 19th Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers, the "last of the 'Commercials'."

The 34th Division had seen more hard fighting, for Fritz had a good ridge overlooking our positions and shielding his own Hindenburg Line from view. General Nicholson was given the task of clearing the enemy from this point of vantage, and preparations were in hand for this when the 9th Battalion arrived in the area. Time was given to the "new chum" to settle down, the 101st and 102nd Brigades bearing the brunt in the line. The battalion was in Bouvincourt billets, training and providing working parties until the 10th August, when the battalion marched to Vadencourt and relieved the 21st Northumberland Fusiliers in Brigade Reserve. This was the day that Brigadier-General H. E. Trevor, D.S.O., resumed command of the Brigade.

The area gave ample evidence of the fiendish destruction wrought by the enemy during his retreat in March to the Hindenburg Line. Villages had been razed, cross-roads blown up, trees felled and orchards denuded. The scene was enough to raise the ire of the most pacific mortal. In the midst of delightful undulating country these scars, monuments of criminal wantonness, everywhere obtruded. Where few shells had been fired, where battle had not been, houses were destroyed, and factories were tangled heaps of

scrap iron. Such actions only served to urge on both the French and the British; and, to the closer observer, it was a matter of joy to note the rapidity with which the severed trunks of fruit trees had been utilized for grafting.

On the night of the 15th August the 9th relieved the 24th/27th Northumberland Fusiliers in the line in the Hargicourt Sector near Villeret. Patrols were active, the conformation of the ground lending itself admirably to this work. In view of the coming operations, a close study was made of the area, and on the 21st the battalion was relieved by the Lucknow Cavalry Brigade and marched to billets at Bouvincourt, resting there until the 26th.

The attack by the 34th Division was in two parts, troops not being available for one combined action. At 4.30 a.m. on the 26th August the barrage came down, and the curtain of flame and steel leaped onwards magically, followed by men of the 101st Brigade. The objectives were gained gallantly, and rapidly put into a state of defence, whereby the enemy counter-attacks were driven off. The enemy continued to shell his old trenches very heavily, and on the right flank he still held part of Railway Trench, his only consolation in the general eviction.

Then came the turn of the 9th Battalion in conjunction with the 24th/27th Battalion to capture Farm Trench and the high ground on Villeret Col in a night attack, 26th/27th August. The trenches had suffered owing to the heavy thundershowers, and the progress of the 24th/27th Battalion had been delayed. We were ready "on the tape," but the other attacking battalion was late. In these circumstances it was decided not to attack alone, and the battalion was withdrawn into support. The 24th/27th arrived later, and one platoon went forward, but the rest of the battalion was withdrawn. Fighting was continued on the 27th by the 15th Royal Scots, and the 9th took over the front line again on the 28th to the accompaniment of violent shelling. This shelling was the enemy's "Adieu" to the mighty 101st Brigade, and the greeting to the relieving 103rd, determined to carry on the fighting tradition.

The weather conditions did not improve, and further attacks were postponed. This sector was in many ways extraordinary. The enemy was fighting to keep his Hindenburg Line intact even from observation; the British were equally determined to push the enemy from his well-chosen vantage points. The net result was fierce shelling, heavy trench mortar strafing, minor but desperate attacks and equally desperate counter-attacks. Both sides had developed the art of barraging to a fine degree, and a "box-

barrage " could be guaranteed to cut off any post from support or aid. It was concentrated hell on this front, and many of the officers had wondered why the operations were not extended. Mysterious preparations were afoot, the meaning of which was not clear until later—the dash for Cambrai.

The early part of September was spent in the usual routine of trench warfare, relieving and being relieved, patrolling and enduring. To the 102nd Brigade was allotted the task of completing the capture of the high ground in front of Villeret, the 21st and 22nd Battalions Northumberland Fusiliers sharing the attack. They did it, after fierce hand-to-hand fighting early on the 9th September, the 24th/27th Battalion creating a neat diversion farther north, the 20th Battalion joining in behind the others of the Tyneside Scottish. Enemy shelling was again heavy—he was not likely to give up the Col without a violent struggle. Thus did the 102nd Brigade follow the noble example of the 101st; and the 103rd, newly constituted, had to await its chance.

The struggle for these trenches continued, and at 2.30 a.m. on the 12th the enemy succeeded in reaching the parapet of the trenches occupied by the 9th Battalion, but was driven off by machine-gun and rifle fire. It was a useful rebuff: its immediate effect was to draw another shell-hate on to the trench. The 9th was relieved on the 14th, and three days later passed from Brigade Reserve to billets at Bernes. Congratulations by Army, Corps, and Division were sent to the devoted brigades, and well had they been earned.

The battalion had one more tour in this sector, being relieved from the support line by the 8th Royal West Kents on the 28th, and re-occupied the billets at Bernes. Next day we marched to Péronne, and on the 30th entrained, detrained at Boisieux au Mont, and marched to a camp in Blaireville. Here the battalion was amalgamated with the 2nd/1st Battalion The Northumberland Hussars, and took the new name of 9th (Northumberland Hussar) Battalion, Northumberland Fusiliers, rather a large mouthful. The dismounted Yeomanry were undergoing Infantry Training, and their joyous advent was somewhat marred by the necessity of transferring some of the "old hands" to other units.

It was believed that the Division would be resting in the area south-west of Arras, training and refitting. The period began well enough, and the battalion welcomed its new Commanding Officer, Lieutenant-Colonel A. Bryant, D.S.O., who came from a staff appointment on the 1st October. The next few days were spent in training, and the promised rest was rudely shattered by

orders to move. On the 8th the battalion marched to Beaumetz, detrained at Proven and marched to Putney Camp there. Four days later we entrained at Proven to Boesinghe and marched to bivouacs at Stray Farm. The dreaded Salient held us.

Held us, yes, in many senses. Will people who never saw this area ever realize the horrors? Mile after mile was churned by shells for months; the ground was sodden and hideous. Hardly a square yard but was a shell-hole, filling rapidly with water. Roads were obliterated: traffic was on duck-board tracks, laboriously kept repaired. Did a man get off the track he was immersed in icy water, evil-smelling and filthy. It is no exaggeration to say that men were drowned in mud. Hooves of mules stuck out of the slime, the bodies invisible. The enemy had these tracks ranged to a nicety; shells were frequent, and at night planes bombed their overhead way along them. Miracles of endurance were performed daily; guns were hauled forward somehow, rations were got up, runners struggled heroically with their important messages, and the ever-working stretcher-bearers carried out the endless stream of wounded.

Into this tortured morass the 9th Battalion went, and relieved the 1st Battalion Rifle Brigade in the front line—where no line was. Waterlogged shell-holes can scarcely be called a line. Shelling was intense, for the enemy feared a renewal of the attacks which had lasted on this front since the 31st July, and systematically searched all the few narrow lines of approach. This tour ended sadly. The battalion was being relieved on the 17th October when about 9 a.m. a shell struck Battalion Headquarters, killing instantly Lieutenant-Colonel A. Bryant, D.S.O., Captain and Adjutant W. F. Robertson, Lieutenant R. Roddam, Intelligence Officer, and Captain F. C. Davies, R.A.M.C. Such a loss at this time was terrible. Though the Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Roddam, and the Medical Officer had but recently joined the battalion they had endeared themselves to all. The Army was the poorer for their passing. Even more poignant was the grief over the Adjutant. “‘Bill’ Robertson, as he always was, and always will be, known, was an officer who belonged to the battalion from the very first. Two years in France as Signal Officer, and for the past twelve months as Adjutant brought him two mentions in despatches, and his work and personality made him popular with everyone.”

The troops moved out under the command of Captain Brady, and arrived at Boesinghe at 12.30 p.m., entraining there for Cardouen Camp, where Major J. S. Allen, M.C., took command.

The 103rd Brigade was not detailed for the coming attack, the 101st again bearing the brunt. With the 18th Division on the right to sweep past Poelcappelle and Requette Farm, and the 35th Division on the left to push up the Dixmude Road to extend the hold on Houthulst Forest, the 34th Division had to advance along the Ypres-Staden Railway, past Turenne Crossing. Pill-boxes dotted this morass, and the brave crews were to die at their posts. Advancing troops were handicapped by the state of the ground, and presented slow-moving targets for the machine-guns in "Hell's Mushrooms," the pill-boxes.

The attack took place on the 22nd; on the previous day the 9th Battalion had moved to Soult Camp, but were not called into the actual battle. This attack was carried out by the 15th and 16th Royal Scots (101st Brigade), and how they fared "in mud and filth up to the neck" is amply described in "The Thirty-Fourth Division" by Lieutenant-Colonel J. Shakespear, C.M.G., C.I.E., D.S.O. Suffice it here to mention that they fought magnificently against the enemy, against the weather and against the mud.

Next day, the 23rd October, the 9th Battalion marched to Boesinghe, and entrained for Proven, being again stationed in Putney Camp. Training continued here until the 27th, and it was with a thankful sigh that orders were received to leave the Salient and proceed south. The battalion entrained at Proven for the Third Army area a few miles south of Arras, marched to Durham Lines and took over from the 6th Black Watch at 10.30 a.m., 28th October. Three days later the 9th relieved the 6th Gordon Highlanders in support in the line immediately south of Heninel, remained in the Hindenburg Support, and took over the front line from the 25th Northumberland Fusiliers on the 4th November. Trench routine was the order of the day, and the battalion varied its Divisional Reserve period by taking over, on the 12th, the Northumberland Lines.

The Divisional front extended from the Arras-Cambrai road on the left to opposite Fontaine Les Croisilles on the right. Dug-outs were comfortable, lit by electric light, and some few, under the urge of the season, did prospect for game, including anything from rats to Boche prisoners.

During one of the periods in reserve the Regimental Aid Post and the Orderly Room Staff messed together. One of the Aid Post men was greatly perturbed over the politeness of one of the Orderly Room clerks. He had to say "Come in," because the other persisted in knocking before entering! Determined to

"larn him" he waited behind the door. Then came the usual knock.

"Come in," said the Aid Postman. He swatted well and truly, and the victim was the Medical Officer.—Tableau!

A battalion dinner was held, and some difficulty was encountered in finding sufficient accommodation. It was a goodly spread, full of real spirit. Amongst the guests we had Major Chenevix-Trench, D.S.O.; he was a welcome reminder of the early days of the war, and joined merrily in the yarn-swopping. The influx of the Hussars, too, helped to keep our county associations fresh. Truly it was a joyous night.

The tolerably quiet time gave ample scope for the furtherance of sports—shooting, boxing and tug-of-war. The battalion did well, but at first the lack of proper training showed its effects. A correspondent wrote at the time: "All our competitors put up good fights, but unfortunately our only great success has been our entrance into the final for the Divisional 'Soccer' Championship. We reached the semi-final stage in our tug-of-war efforts, and some ardent athletes also tried their prowess at running. As regards the latter, it has been whispered that many went, but *some* returned."

CHAPTER XI

THE LULL BEFORE THE STORM: NOVEMBER 1917—MARCH 1918

ON 22nd November, 1917, Major W. A. Vignoles, D.S.O., of the 10th Battalion The Lincolnshire Regiment, was promoted Lieutenant-Colonel and took over command of the battalion when it was stationed in Northumberland Lines, a huttet camp near Mercatel. The previous day the Brigade (103rd, 34th Division) had been taken over by Brigadier-General J. C. Chaplin, D.S.O., of the Cameronians, the Brigade-Major being Captain Perkins, R.E. When Colonel Vignoles took over, the battalion was in charge of Major J. Allen, M.C., with Major the Hon. Jasper Ridley (2nd/1st Northumberland Hussars) acting as Second-in-Command.

Training was carried out on the 23rd, and the following day the troops marched via Mercatel and Henin to the Hindenburg Line, relieving the 10th Lincolns (101st Brigade) in the sector opposite Chérisy, the front line being a series of posts. Owing to the success of the first thrust towards Cambrai, it was anticipated that the enemy would retire. Vigilance was the order of the day. Our patrols held command of No Man's Land, the enemy only daring to come out in large numbers, and, even then, was easily driven back. In the darkness, however, the encounters between patrols were usually inconclusive.

When the Boche refused to come out, "B" Company organized a little stunt on their own. A Lewis-gun was taken into a shell hole as near the enemy's line as possible, and trained on to a known machine-gun post. A rifle grenade was then fired on the post, and, when the machine-gun opened fire, the Lewis replied on the flash. This little trick on several occasions produced satisfactory results.

At this time there were some two hundred non-commissioned officers and men in the battalion, with a number of officers, who had been transferred from the 2nd/1st Northumberland Hussars (Yeomanry). Officers and men did excellent work and distinguished themselves on patrol. They had received a short training in infantry work at the Base, and had put their training to good use. Unfor-



LIEUT.-COL. W. A. VIGNOLLES, D.S.O.

[*Facing p. 70.*

tunately, while at the Base, the officers had been encouraged to apply for transfers to other branches of the service, with the result that the majority eventually left. At this period those remaining were Major Ridley, Lieutenants Rowe, Haddock, Hutchinson, and Second-Lieutenants Hooper, Cross and Hopkins.

The battalion was relieved on the 28th by the 25th Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers (Lieutenant-Colonel E. M. Moulton-Barrett, D.S.O.), and moved back into the Brigade reserve trenches, providing working parties for the front line. Another tour in the front line (3rd-6th December) was followed by a return to Northumberland Lines on 7th December. The relief at having wider scope was, as usual, very great, even if the scenery was not inspiring. The Hun had razed the villages, heaps of stone and brick indicating his savage retirement. Camps were sited adjoining the arrow-direct Arras-Bapaume road, which had been repaired by the British and brought into A1 condition.

Life in the hatted camp was comfortable, and little trouble was experienced from the bombing planes. Training continued daily, and the usual working parties were provided at night. From the 12th December the battalion "stood to" each morning, as the higher command anticipated an enemy attack. A Divisional boxing contest was carried out, also a cross-country competition. In the latter the battalion secured first place, and, later, representing the Division in the Corps Sports, took second place.

The return to Brigade reserve (York Lines) took place on 14th December. Snow was falling, but a concert was held, under great difficulties. A couple of braziers, plus a ration of rum, worked miracles on the performers, though it is still a mystery how singers could carry on in the stifling fumes from the charcoal. The huts forming York Lines had seen divers dismantlings and re-erects, and had suffered accordingly. The officers' mess was quite uninhabitable when the snow melted, and other huts offered equally free passage to the streams of water. So to bed (wire netting on frames), and trust to the impermeability of "waterproof" sheets!

Four days later the battalion took over the front east of Guémappe, the relief being carried out in daylight. Trenches were good, well duck-boarded, but not revetted. The chalky soil stood well until a thaw set in. It was a long frontage (1,100 yards), and it was difficult to find sufficient men to man the sentry-groups and yet push on with the much needed thickening of the wiring in front. The enemy entanglements were vastly superior to ours.

Nothing unusual occurred during the tour, ordinary routine reliefs taking place. It was not possible to celebrate Christmas Day until 31st December, when there was a special dinner, with turkeys and two pigs as the star turns. Padre Jollans had been busier than usual. Major Allen was in temporary command during this period, the Commanding Officer being on leave. Major Ridley had recently left the battalion, joining Corps Headquarters Staff ("Q" Branch).

Heavy frosts in January were followed by a rapid thaw. The trenches suffered, and the routine reliefs were carried out at night by the overland method. The trenches were soon cleared, however. Generally, matters were quiet, comparatively little artillery fire being experienced. A raid by the 26th Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers (4 officers and 60 other ranks) was frustrated by the enemy. Gaps had been cut in the Boche wire, and the 9th Battalion (on the left of the 26th Battalion) had great difficulty in keeping the gaps open. The enemy, however, on the night of the raid, had pushed his machine-guns out in front of the gaps, and so escaped the barrage. The intending raiders suffered heavily.

Major D. R. Osborne returned (7th January) from the Commanding Officers Course at Aldershot, and took over temporary command, Major Allen proceeding to the next course. Trench routine continued, but on 25th January the Division was relieved by the 3rd Division, and the 9th Battalion moved out of the line to No. 2 camp at Blaireville. The troops were glad to be in the "back areas" once again, even if training did alternate with working-party duty! The main work was the burying of telegraph cables and making the hutments less vulnerable to aeroplane attacks.

The Divisional "Chequers" Concert Party gave a series of performances at Blaireville of their pantomime "Dick Whittington." This was produced by Lieutenant W. Thomas, Quarter-master of one of the Field Ambulances, and Lieutenant-Colonel Alexander, Officer Commanding Divisional Train. Dresses and scenery had been purchased at home, or in Paris, and a very fine show was the result. Lieutenant Thomas was a comic "principal boy" and everyone fell in love with the "principal girl" (Lance-Corporal H. Charles), who was delightfully clever. An American, who was behind the scenes after the show, was horrified to find "her" dressing amongst the men, and left hurriedly.

The shortage of man-power had necessitated a reorganization of Divisions. Brigades were cut down to three battalions, and,

on 7th February, 1918, the 103rd Brigade was reconstituted with the following :—

9th Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers.

10th Battalion The Lincolnshire Regiment (from 101st Brigade).

1st Battalion The East Lancashire Regiment (from another Division).

The eight battalions of the Fusiliers which originally constituted the 102nd and 103rd Brigades were now reduced to three Battalions in the 102nd Brigade, while the 101st Brigade consisted of 15th and 16th Battalions The Royal Scots and 11th Battalion The Suffolk Regiment. The 18th Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers remained with the Division as Pioneers.

A move was made the following day via Simencourt, Wanquetin, Avesnez-le-Comte, to Liencourt on the Frévent road. Here Headquarters "A" and "D" Companies were billeted, with "B" and "C" Companies in Dénier. Packs had been carried by motor lorries—the Army had learnt the value of this procedure—and the men had marched in fighting order. The turn-out was smart, as, during the rest, transport vehicles had been repainted and the metal-work polished. In addition all helmets had been painted a uniform colour, with the regimental badge in green on the side. The Commanding Officer was complimented by the Acting-Brigadier on the appearance and marching of the battalion.

The march was continued next day via Magnicourt to Buneville (Headquarters "C" and "D" Companies) and Monts-en-Ternois ("A" and "B" Companies with Quartermaster Stores). A little hitch occurred in the billet allotted to the Commanding Officer, and finally the billeting officer had to get a legal document from Monsieur le Maire. It appeared that in the house was a wardrobe without a lock, and the owners were afraid that their best Sunday clothes might be looted.

Training continued, but as the available ground was limited in size, attacks by platoons were the biggest manœuvres possible. Time was mostly spent in musketry, Lewis-gun training, bombing, platoon and company drill. This was varied by an inter-platoon football competition, which was eventually won by No. 15 platoon. A Brigade route march took place on the 19th February, and two days later the battalion was inspected by the Divisional Commander (Major-General Sir C. L. Nicholson, K.C.B., C.M.G.). The battalion was steady on parade, but the same cannot be said of the mount

of an unnamed Company Commander; the band struck up, and the horse bolted.

Towards the end of the training period No. 7 platoon of "B" Company, under Second-Lieutenant Broughton, won the inter-platoon competition in combined musketry, Lewis-gun, and bayonet fighting. On the 26th the Brigade was again inspected, this time by the Commander of the VI Corps, Lieutenant-General Sir Aylmer Haldane, K.C.B. After the inspection, the Corps Commander addressed the troops and stated that an enemy offensive was expected. It was reported that General Von Below, who had commanded the German troops when they broke through the Italian front in the autumn of 1917, had arrived on the front opposite the Third Army. Under orders from General Headquarters the Division would return to the VI Corps area, and take over a portion of the line.

Next day the battalion marched to Barly, via Avesnes-le-Comte, and billeted there overnight, and continued the following morning to No. 2 Camp at Blaireville. It is worthy of note that in the four days marching to and from the "back area" only one man fell out.

While the battalion had been at Buneville, the weather had been good; but March came in with a blizzard. Officers went out to reconnoitre the forward area, which was farther south than the sector previously held. On the 3rd March the battalion marched to a hatted camp at Ervillers on the Arras-Bapaume road, the Brigade being in Divisional reserve. An old friend, Lieutenant-Colonel Blockley, who had commanded the 9th Battalion in the early part of 1917, took over command of the 10th Lincolns about this time.

During the evening of the 7th March, the battalion relieved the 25th Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers in the front line trenches. On our right was the 1st Battalion East Lancs who joined up with the 59th Division (around Bullecourt). The 101st Brigade was on the left, but across the Sensée River. Throughout this period the enemy was quiet, though he could be seen busily digging trenches. Despite vigorous attentions from our 18-pounders and Lewis-guns, the Hun pushed on with his work.

Prisoners taken at various points on the British front all gave accounts of German Divisions being specially trained for the coming offensive. Enemy troops had been ordered to evacuate front line posts, on any sign of a raid, so as to prevent the British from obtaining identifications. Few enemy patrols were encountered. If the Boche desired to lull the British into a sense

of false security, he overshot the mark by his very quietness. And he appeared to forget that there were other channels of information! Reports from aeroplanes indicated vast activity behind the German lines, but generally, though the offensive was expected, there were some who doubted.

One prisoner gave valuable information: indeed, it was so definite that at first the whole thing looked like a typical Hunnish trap. He stated that the offensive would begin on the 13th March, and would extend from St. Quentin to Bullecourt. However, trap or no trap, special precautions were taken. Counter preparation by the Corps artillery was carried out on the night of the 12th; there was scarcely any reply.

Morning dawned with everyone alert. The relief of the 9th Battalion had been postponed, pending the onslaught. Our guns fired heavily; but there was still but scant reply. The Boche was *not* to be lured into the error of disclosing his gun-strength. Nothing happened: the tension relaxed, and the normal relief by the 10th Lincolns was carried out, and the battalion moved into shelters in the railway cutting to the north of St. Leger behind the trench known as Bunhill Row. Strenuous work was put in, wiring and digging to give further protection. Each morning from 4 a.m. to 7 a.m. the battalion "stood to." Captured prisoners had stated that the attack was postponed for a few days, and our artillery fire slackened.

The weather had changed, and, since the 6th, had been warm and fine by day, with clear moonlight nights, and a touch of frost in the early morning. As the thousands of men stood at their battle positions before dawn, in silence awaiting the coming of the attack, high above their heads larks sang, heedless of the drama being staged. It was another of the many incongruities of war.

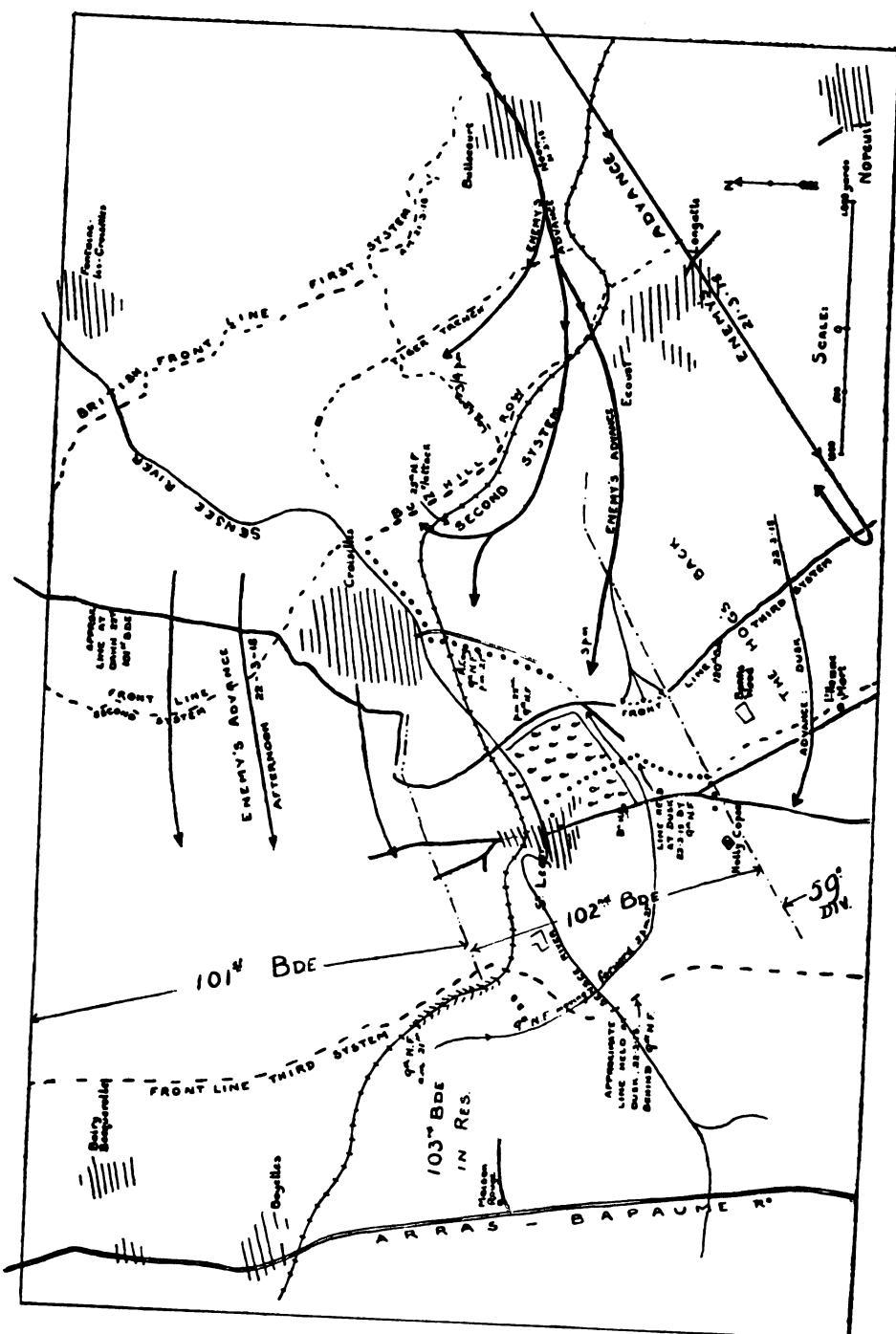
The Brigade was relieved by the 102nd Brigade on the 19th March, but did not move back to the usual billets at Ervillers, but was accommodated nearer the line in readiness.

At this point it is as well to consider briefly the relative positions of the two armies on the eve of a momentous struggle. The British Sector began at the Oise, where our Fifth Army joined up with the French. This front extended as far north as Gouzeaucourt, linking up with the Third Army under General Sir Julian Byng, K.C.B., whose line extended to Gavrelle, north of Arras. The average frontage per Division was, in the Fifth Army 6,750 yards; in the Third Army 4,700 yards, and, be it remembered, in February, the British Divisions had been reduced

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in strength. Sir Julian Byng's force, of which the 34th Division formed part, consisted of eight Divisions in line, with seven Divisions in reserve; while General Gough's army was composed of seventeen (including three cavalry) Divisions. Against these thirty-two Divisions no less than sixty-four German Divisions were hurled on the first day of the attack. These men had been specially trained as "storm-troops," were entirely refitted, were backed by a colossal weight of artillery, and their morale had never been higher. This German attack was to be the end; the British were to be swept away, and the long-promised spoliation of Britain and France was to be accomplished! Knowing their vast superiority in numbers, inspired by the promises of great rewards, the Germans were to advance to a crushing victory.

FIGHTING ROUND ST. LÉGER, MARCH, 1918.



CHAPTER XII

THE MARCH RETREAT: MARCH 1918

AT 4.50 a.m. on the 21st March, 1918, the enemy's barrage fell. There was a thin fog which made observation impossible, but the fog cleared somewhat later. From the reserve lines occupied by the battalion the full power of the enemy's shelling was clear. Trenches, villages, and roads were swept by a hurricane of shells, gas being largely used. The 9th "stood to," while the cooks prepared breakfast. No orders arrived, and the men turned in again ready to move at a moment's notice. The morning passed, the din of the shell-fire rising and falling. Unseen by the battalion the grey hordes were, despite the resistance of the front line troops, and their own immense casualties, pushing on into the British system.

At 1 p.m. urgent orders were received to move forward to a pre-arranged position south of St. Leger. In five minutes the battalion was on the move, "A" Company leading. St. Leger was being heavily shelled, but, moving by platoons, the companies got through without casualties. By this time the enemy was in Bunhill Row, where the Headquarters of front line battalions were situated, and when the Commanding Officer reached the high ground west of St. Leger the enemy was visible coming down the slopes of the Hog's Back, about two thousand yards away. When he reached the 102nd Brigade Headquarters at the south end of St. Leger Wood, where the General Officer Commanding 103rd Brigade had arrived, orders were received for the 9th to take up a position round the wood and hold up the advancing enemy. There was no time for formal orders; it was a race between the 9th and the enemy to the trenches east of the wood. Each company was directed to its position, and the situation, only vaguely known, was outlined.

German machine-guns were coming more into action and a small field-gun, cunningly hidden, fired on our troops. It was so close that the whizz of the shell lasted but a fraction of a second; and so flat was its trajectory that many shells ricochetted and

burst some distance behind. The enemy heavies never ceased their "presentation of iron-works." Two of our 18-pounders (160th Brigade, Royal Field Artillery) were supporting the 9th, and did great execution firing over open sights. The enemy broke, and re-formed, broke again, and gallantly re-formed, being directed for a long time by a mounted officer who seemed to have a charmed life, so difficult was it to kill him. The 9th opened long-range Lewis-gun fire and caused heavy casualties, but the enemy ranks refilled as if by magic.

Despite the murderous fire, parties of the enemy dribbled forward into dead ground, re-formed, and advanced, covered by machine-guns, against the wood. Posts had been driven in by machine-gun fire from Hog's Back. Under cover of this fire, the enemy reached our wire, but was driven back. A company of Royal Engineers had reported, and was helping to hold the line. The East Lancs had occupied the third system on the Hog's Back, but had been withdrawn to counter-attack towards Ecoust. One company, however, was retained by Colonel Vignoles. Owing to this withdrawal, under orders, of the East Lancs, the enemy had gained a footing in the front line (third system) on our right, and was not entirely dislodged. Bombing fights were continuous here, but the enemy could gain no ground against the stubborn resistance of "B" Company and the Company of East Lancs.

About 5 p.m. it was discovered that details of the 25th Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers were holding out on the road south of Croisilles. To their support was sent No. 3 platoon (Second-Lieutenant Jamieson), while No. 1 platoon (Second-Lieutenant C. H. Walker) counter-attacked through the wire from the south-east corner of the wood, killed twenty of the enemy, captured two machine-guns, and occupied the road. Other reinforcements came up to support our front line—details of "J" Special Company Royal Engineers and of the 102nd Brigade Pioneer Company.

In the history of a battalion, it is not possible to give a detailed account of what happened on the whole front, but at dusk of the 21st March the position was approximately as follows: The 40th Division on our right was holding the front and support lines of the Third System in front of L'Homme Mort and in front and rear of Bank's Wood. This position was ascertained by an officer's patrol. In the front line on the left of the 40th Division there remained a "pocket" of the enemy who had entered the trench during the afternoon. Three companies 9th Northumbadians, two companies Royal Engineers, and one company East Lancs were holding trenches in the south-east and north-east

edges of St. Leger Wood, while "A" Company, under Captain Dallas, was on the road south of Croisilles, with two platoons of the Pioneer Company 102nd Brigade in touch with the details of the 25th Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers. From the left of this detachment the line was carried east of Croisilles by the 10th Lincolns.

During the night orders were received to withdraw the advanced platoons of "A" Company, Royal Engineers and Pioneers to the east edge of the wood, to conform with the withdrawal of troops from Croisilles. Our left was in touch with the 10th Lincolns on the railway line in the Sensée Valley. On the right, "B" Company and the East Lancs were in touch with the 13th Yorks (40th Division), holding in check, by constant bombing, the enemy party in the front line. About 3 a.m. Second-Lieutenant Mason and Sergeant Bennett went out on patrol, and verified the presence of the enemy in force in the Second System on Hog's Back. The night, however, passed comparatively quietly. The 102nd and 103rd Brigade Headquarters withdrew to positions farther back, under orders from Divisional Headquarters, 9th Battalion Headquarters remaining at the south end of St. Leger.

At 8 a.m. 22nd, the whole position was subjected to an intense bombardment, "heavies" being largely used. Under cover of this, and supported by low-flying aeroplanes, the enemy attacked, but made no progress. Second-Lieutenant C. H. Walker, "A" Company, withheld the fire of his men until the enemy was up to the wire. This move caused many casualties and drove the attackers back in disorder. The enemy began then to dig in along the road in front of "A" Company. Owing to the configuration of the ground fire could not be directed on them by our troops, but later, when communication with the artillery had been established (all wires had been cut early on by the bombardment) shell-fire was opened on the diggers.

About 11.45 a.m. the 13th Yorks counter-attacked the pocket of the enemy and inflicted heavy casualties, but did not completely clear the trench. The enemy was able to send up reinforcements and supplies by a route not visible from our lines. After this there was a lull, but large numbers of fresh enemy troops could be seen arriving below the crest on which St. Leger stands. The artillery fired "from the map" on likely places of assembly.

The Quartermaster (Lieutenant Hutton) and the Transport Officer (Lieutenant Hewson) arrived about 11 a.m. and made arrangements for the rations; they left about noon, just escaping an intense bombardment. Shells of all calibres came over through-

out the afternoon, and under cover of this fire the enemy launched a series of determined attacks. All were driven back until 4 p.m., when the 13th Yorks, much weakened by losses, were forced out of the front line. This caused our right to fall back, the left being then ordered to conform.

The strain on the front line was very great. Accordingly all available personnel of Battalion Headquarters was organized and led forward through the wood by Second-Lieutenant L. Fletcher, M.M. (Intelligence Officer), Second-Lieutenant W. H. Corner (Signals), and Regimental Sergeant-Major Armitage, M.C. This party moved steadily forward in extended order through the barrage, and provided a much-needed steady element. An effective little encounter-attack organized by Second-Lieutenant W. L. Brown eased the situation temporarily.

The enemy had penetrated the trench at the south-east corner of the wood, and pushing along it, tried to bomb our men out. Lieutenant H. S. Rowe, 9th Battalion, went forward with a party, including some of the Yorks, and drove the enemy back. He shot four himself. At 5 o'clock another attempt was made, but again Lieutenant Rowe, Corporal Watson and men of "B" Company repulsed the invaders. The enemy retreated over the ridge, suffering casualties, and the Yorks re-occupied the trench. In these engagements at close quarters the Mills grenade was easily superior to the enemy's "potato masher." The advantage gained was followed by a counter-barrage from our artillery, but could not be pushed home owing to lack of reserves.

By about 6 p.m. it seemed as though the enemy had been definitely beaten off; but British troops were seen retiring about Croisilles. It appeared that a break in our line had occurred on the south end of Henin Hill, thus enfilading the 10th Lincolns. This caused a withdrawal which allowed the enemy to penetrate between the Lincolns and the 9th Battalion in the Sensée Valley. On our right, too, the British had retired to the Army Line, and an enemy machine-gun began firing into Battalion Headquarters from the right rear. The 9th was very much up in the air! Defensive flanks were accordingly formed.

No communication with Brigade Headquarters had been possible, and the situation, except on our immediate flanks, was unknown. In the late afternoon a pigeon message was despatched: "Hard pressed, but holding on." The little feathered messenger, we learnt later, reached Headquarters within half an hour, a wonderful performance in the continuous rain of shells. The situation at dusk, when a new attack, supported by planes, began,

was nearly desperate, the troops on our flanks having been driven in; but there was nothing to do but to fight on. This decision proved to be the right one; the enemy attack was repulsed, and matters settled down somewhat. From noon to dusk had been a period of intense anxiety; night brought a welcome, if temporary respite. It was curious that the enemy did not continue his attacks at night.

Sergeant Rising of the Signal Company Royal Engineers reported at Headquarters having repaired the line to Brigade. He had been at work all day keeping in touch with Brigade or Division, and when the Battalion lines were cut he had acted as observer. The wireless had been put out of action early on the preceding day, and the men were now sent back with their apparatus. The artillery had done good work all day. A major and a subaltern had taken up their stations near Battalion Headquarters, and, despite the fact that they had no protection, kept the guns well posted with valuable information. These are details in the long list of heroic actions of that day.

At 8.15 p.m. Colonel Vignoles spoke on the 'phone to the Brigadier, who was very much surprised to hear that the 9th was still in St. Leger. As there was no chance, both flanks being gone, of holding it for another day orders were issued for a withdrawal. The retirement was carried out successfully, Lewis-guns covering the companies. The movement went on as calmly as an ordinary trench relief. Pouches were filled, all undamaged Lewis-guns, magazines, and signal apparatus were brought away, and as each company was clear, its commander reported to the Colonel. The last company to be clear was that of the East Lancs, which had been on the right and had done good work throughout the day. The exact time of the evacuation is not definitely known, but it was probably nearly 10 o'clock when the last platoon moved out, and one Lewis-gun team covering the withdrawal reported having remained on the hill until midnight without seeing the enemy.

As the companies withdrew they encountered some machine-gun fire from our own line. Bearing to the right down into the valley, they got clear of this, but some casualties occurred from shell-fire while crossing the Sensée Valley. We were to occupy the trenches near Judas Farm, but found these fully manned by the 38th (Welsh) Division. These troops had no idea that any of the British Army had been in front of them! Accordingly, the Commanding Officer gave orders for the battalion to concentrate under Major Osborne near Judas Farm, while he

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endeavoured to get into touch with Brigade or Divisional Headquarters. Wires were down, but eventually he managed to get through to Divisional Headquarters, and obtained permission to withdraw the battalion at once. Before daylight the hutments at Hamelincourt were reached; here, the cookers were ready to supply hot tea—thanks to the efforts of the Staff Captain and the Quartermaster. Tired, but cheery, the men turned in, proud of the knowledge that, against superior numbers, they had put up a great fight.

It was obvious that Hamelincourt would soon be anything but a health resort, a long line of 60- and 18-pounders being already in action very close to the hutments. Orders arrived for the battalion to proceed to the west of Moyenneville. This village stands on a high hill from which part of the St. Leger Wood was clearly visible. It was sad to think that this area would already be in the enemy hands, and probably he was directing artillery fire from the hill. Moyenneville had been shelled that morning, and the guns opened out again as one company reached the crest, killing Sergeant-Major Henderson, one of the warrant officers transferred from the Northumberland Hussars.

The battalion was distributed in the open in small parties, and the men lay down to sleep again while awaiting further orders. Runners, whose duties had taken them through St. Leger the previous day, now produced quantities of cigarettes *ex* the Y.M.C.A. Canteen, which had been abandoned by its guardians. Excellent scrounging.

Then began the reckoning. The roll was called, and the casualties amounted to about one hundred and twenty, a very small number when the nature of the fighting is considered. The determined resistance undoubtedly saved many casualties; the effective retirement from St. Leger saved more. One of the last casualties evacuated from St. Leger was Regimental Sergeant-Major Armitage, M.C., who was wounded when leading a counter-attack. To our great regret he died later.

In an action of this desperate character, it would be invidious to select any one officer or man for special mention. All ranks did well, in true Fusilier style. Many men were honoured; many more should have been. In this brief outline of the heroic resistance put up by the battalion the quality of the troops is shown by every incident. It is no wonder that the Commanding Officer received many congratulations on the superb fighting qualities of his well-led troops.

CHAPTER XIII

THE BATTLE OF THE LYS : APRIL 1918

At 2 p.m. 23rd March the battalion was ordered to move, and marched to a position on the west side of the Ayette-Bucquoy road, about seventeen kilometres south of Arras. The Division was concentrated by brigades in this area, and the battalion had an experience of old-time campaigning in bivouacs. The weather was very fine, with a sharp frost at night. Some lucky individuals secured gun-pits, and were much envied. All along the route were signs of retreat. Refugees tramped dismally, or drove shaky old carts laden with what they had salvaged of their worldly possessions. An aerodrome, evacuated by the Air Force, was burning, the flames creeping rapidly over the spars.

The following day General Nicholson visited the battalion, and was glad to hear that the casualties were relatively light. He congratulated the Commanding Officer on the fight put up by the 9th. During the afternoon the battalion marched via Bucquoy, Hennescamp, and Bienvillers to billets in La Herlière. Next day the march was continued via Saulty-Sombrin to Grand Rullecourt; while on the 26th the trek was via Frevent, Vacquerie Le Boucq to Wavans, near Auxi-le-Chateau. At Wavans precautionary measures were taken, positions selected for a line of outposts and observers posted. Civilians were moving west on the Doullens road, having fled from the battle zone east of Amiens. There were the usual rumours of uniformed strangers spreading alarm, and of various individuals being "shot at dawn." Everything remained quiet, and the French people in the billets were reassured.

The next day was spent quietly, and the postman collected a heavy bag full of the latest despatches, chiefly "whizz-bangs" (Field Post Cards) from the front. A three-day route march is a wonderful tonic: but, like all tonics, the taking is not always pleasant! Near midnight the troops marched again to Frevent, to entrain. It was a beautiful night, the air was sharp, and the buglers were in spirited form. The battalion marched well. A portion of the transport with Lewis-guns moved with the battalion

via Villers L'Hôpital, the remainder with that of other units being brigaded under Major Osborne to move by road to Estaires in the First Army Area.

At Frévent a long delay occurred. The line at St. Pol had been blocked by a shell from a long-range gun. The train arrived at 10 a.m. on the 28th, and just before dark the battalion detrained at Steenbecque, six kilometres south-south-west of Hazebrouck. Billets were at Caudescure, near Vieux Berquin. A drizzling rain and a dark night made the finding of the billets somewhat difficult, but by 10 p.m. all were reported in. The next day the battalion marched to Estaires, where good billets were found, despite shelling by long-range guns, and bombing by planes. Some anxiety was felt at the numbers of men in a few of the billets.

On the 30th March the battalion moved to the forward area, into huts and billets at La Rolanderie Farm, south of Erquinghem, and next day relieved the 2nd/5th Battalion K.O.R.L. Regiment as right battalion of the right Brigade on the Divisional front. This front, including the Rue du Bois salient occupied by the 9th Battalion was held in extreme depth. The left Brigade of the 34th Division extended round the Armentières salient, and joined up with the 25th Division. Curiously enough, the Division on our right was relieved by the 40th Division, and the 13th Yorks, last seen on our right at St. Leger, again took over the sector next to us. On the morning of the 9th April, the 2nd Portuguese Division was on the right of the 40th Division, with the 55th Division beyond the Portuguese.

It had been known to General Headquarters that an attack in this area was imminent, but it was expected that the condition of the ground would delay it. However, the weather was remarkably dry for the season, and it was observed that enemy preparations were being hurried forward. In consequence, broad belts of wire were then rapidly run out to form defensive flanks in our trench systems. It was comparatively quiet in the line, but on the 7th April the enemy carried out a prolonged gas bombardment of the whole front from Lens to Armentières.

At about this time Major D. R. Osborne was detailed to take over temporary command of the 15th Royal Scots, Major Allen, on his return from the Aldershot School, taking over the duties of Second-in-Command. The Division was part of the XV Corps, First Army, but was later transferred to IX Corps, Second Army, during the ensuing battle. It had been intended to relieve the Portuguese Division on the 10th April by a British Division; this move the enemy frustrated by attacking on the 9th April.

At 4 a.m. on that day a heavy bombardment opened, gas again being freely used. Several direct hits were obtained on our advanced Battalion Headquarters, several casualties resulting. At 7 a.m. in a thick fog the attack was launched from La Bassée to Bois Grenier, involving the 55th Division, the Portuguese, and the 40th Division. The Portuguese were swamped almost immediately by the great power of the enemy attack, and the enemy poured through the gap. The 55th Division and the 40th Division held on magnificently, but were forced to bend and form defensive flanks, the former facing north from Festubert to Le Touret, the latter facing south from Bois Grenier to Sailly-sur-la-Lys.

The enemy had therefore, in his first attack, effected a clear break through our line some nine miles wide. King Edward's Horse and the 11th Cyclist Battalion were rushed up to fill the gap, and put up a strenuous fight in Lacouture and Vieille Chajpelle, thus enabling the 51st and 50th (Northumbrian) Divisions to come into action between Le Touret and Estaires. The 40th Division had been gradually forced back on the Lys, and early in the afternoon withdrew across the river at Bac St. Maur. During the afternoon the 13th Yorks informed us that they were forming a defensive flank, and by nightfall they were holding a line along Shaftesbury Avenue to Shaftesbury House, thence along the Rivière des Laies towards La Vessée. The 9th Battalion accordingly conformed, facing south-west through Park Row, La Vessée, to Streaky Bacon Farm.

The general situation was unknown to us: and in fact it was not until the 12th April that we heard of the progress of the enemy during his first attack! Wires were continually cut, and failed altogether during the night. Active patrolling was the only means of discovering the local conditions, and the enemy was found digging-in from Red House to Bois Grenier.

The enemy renewed his attacks early on the 10th. There was heavy fighting at Estaires, while on the right of the 34th Division the invaders appeared close to our Brigade Headquarters, just missing capturing our transport, which moved back to Bailleul. At 5.30 a.m. a new attack had begun from Hill 60 to Frelinghien, about the left of the 34th Division. By midday Ploegsteert Village ("Plugstreet") and Messines had fallen. Our right flank, too, was heavily engaged all the morning, strenuous efforts being made by the enemy to drive "D" Company from Streaky Bacon Farm. There was still no information as to the general situation, all wires being cut. The only solution, as at St. Leger, was to hold on. Batteries were on the move and no artillery support was available.

It later transpired that the enemy was in Steenwerck and Ploegsteert: the map will indicate how precarious was the position of the 34th Division. One of our runners returning from Brigade Headquarters brought orders to withdraw at 3 p.m. across the Lys. Neighbouring battalions were informed, and we arranged to move out via Rue Fleurie, rearguards being left in the front line, "D" Company at Streaky Bacon Farm and "B" Company at La Vessée.

Before these orders could be issued Colonel Tuck, 11th Suffolks, at La Rolanderie, reported by telephone, the only wire working, that his right companies had been driven in, and he thought the enemy was in Erquinghem. He had orders to cover the withdrawal of the 9th, but urged a rapid move as the enemy had almost surrounded him. Ere the companies could move, however, the Suffolks, having put up a gallant and prolonged resistance, had to retire, the invaders being then almost into their Battalion Headquarters.

As the withdrawal proceeded our rearguards were heavily assailed, "D" Company and party at Streaky Bacon Farm especially so. Captain I. G. C. Brady, who had twice been buried during the morning by shell explosions, extricated the party and withdrew to Rue Fleurie, covered by a flank guard of the Headquarters of the 9th Battalion and 10th Lincolns. "A" Company and Battalion Headquarters proceeded as arranged towards the railway bridge (about 7 p.m.), but the enemy had already got this ranged and was shelling the road very heavily. His patrols, too, pushed on, and an advance party had established a machine-gun post at the junction of the railway and the Erquinghem road. This gun was firing down the road into Armentières.

At first, in the dusk, this was thought to be a British party; but the Boche helmets were revealed. With the help of two guns of the Machine-gun Company this post was engaged. A party crossed the road, dashing across one at a time, and, reorganizing, attacked the enemy on his left flank. After a sharp fight, in which Major J. S. Allen, M.C., took a prominent part, the enemy was driven out, leaving one prisoner.

Captain K. D. C. Macrae, Royal Army Medical Corps, formed a temporary aid post with Captain W. Jollans, C.F., and attended to the many wounded men. The remainder of the party pushed on towards the river, and succeeded in crossing this by way of a wrecked wooden bridge, the railway bridge having been demolished. The wooden structure was broken in the centre, but the halves were hanging in the water. With the aid of some poles

the party got safely across, carrying their machine-guns. The enemy seemed to have stayed his advance, and the Medical Officer was not molested; during the night he got all casualties safely across the river and rejoined the battalion.

The other companies moved through Armentières and crossed the river by the road bridge at Pont De Nieppe. This bridge had been left for us, and, after the last company and the Lincolns were across, the bridge was destroyed by the 18th (Pioneer) Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers. The 102nd Brigade was found lining the railway towards Les 3 Tilleuls, facing south-west. Our companies were collected, and assembled at Les 3 Tilleuls while the Commanding Officer proceeded to Brigade Headquarters. The staff was eventually found in Nieppe, the situation having changed. As Colonel Vignoles and his runner trekked along the railway, they were unaware that this line had been in the hands of the enemy during the afternoon! It must be admitted, however, that they saw no signs of the enemy about the railway.

Brigade orders were to hold the railway line facing south-west from Touquet Parmentier station to Les 3 Tilleuls, the 9th Battalion remaining in reserve just north of Nieppe. The night was very dark, but touch had been gained with all of the companies. These were assembled according to orders, and the men dug themselves in. Battalion Headquarters was in a house recently evacuated, but the owner returned in an endeavour to save more of his goods. The night afforded but little of the necessary sleep.

The retirement had been carried out steadily and calmly: the resistance of "D" Company proving of the greatest value to both the 9th Battalion and the 13th Yorks. It was reported that Second-Lieutenant L. W. Featherstone was missing after the withdrawal of the rearguard: later news came through that he was wounded, and a prisoner.

CHAPTER XIV

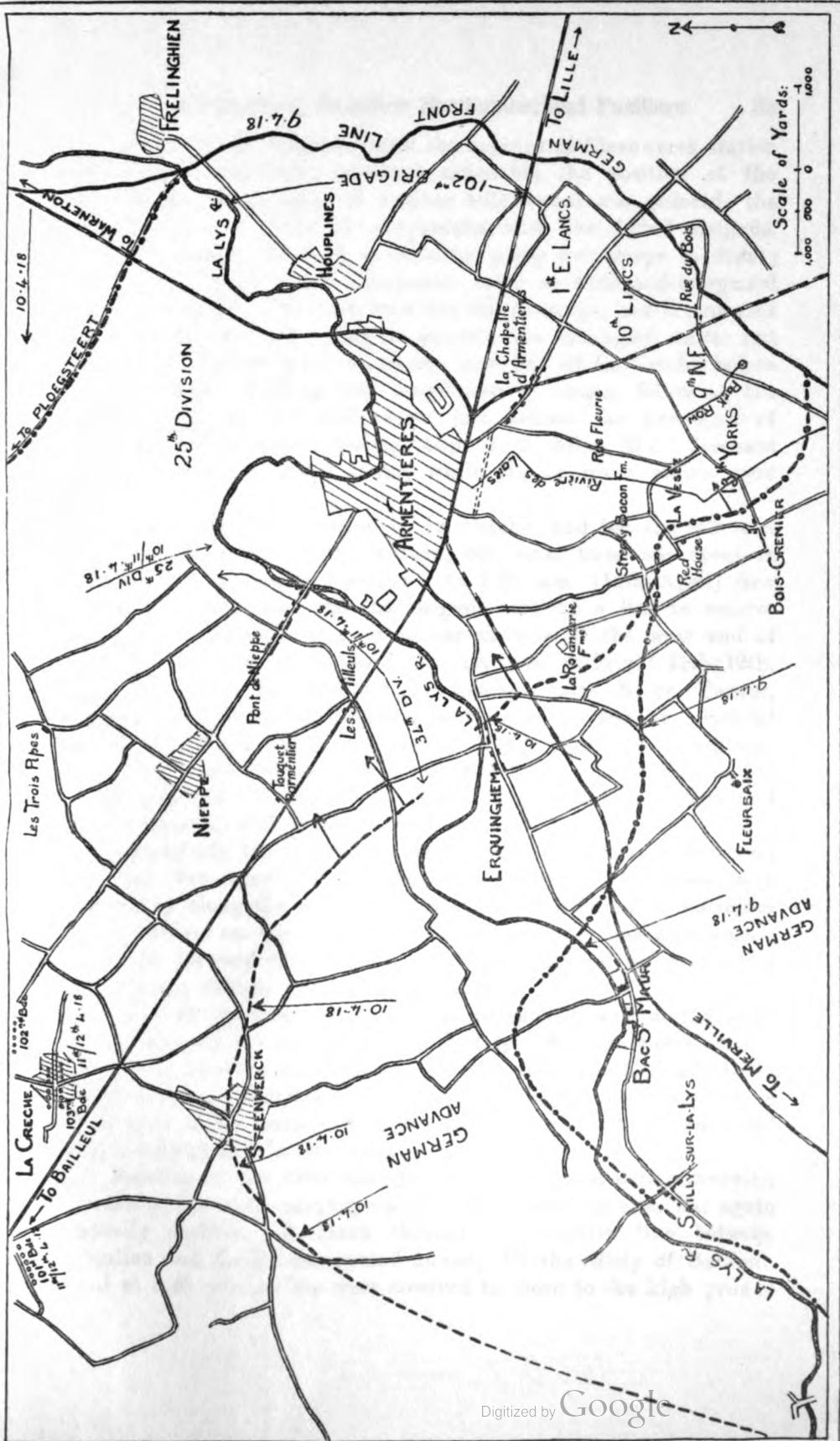
THE BATTLE OF THE LYS (*continued*): APRIL 1918

ALL was quiet at dawn, and the troops had breakfast. The village of Nieppe was full of old people who had not been able to get away. They were helpless for lack of transport; many were too old or too weak to walk. It was pitiful to see them, dressed in their best clothes, the only belongings some of them were able to save. One old man of eighty-five was wheeling his wife, aged eighty, in a wheelbarrow with a few precious chattels down the Bailleul road. We hoped that, a little farther, they would be picked up by one of our limbers. What a commentary on the twentieth century!

The farms had been left as they were with the animals wandering about calling pitifully for food. Where the farms were occupied temporarily by troops, the animals had been fed, and the cows milked. And the men were not the only ones who had extra rations in this way. Several officers, including the Commanding Officer, can vouch for the excellence of egg beaten up in new milk!

At 10 a.m. the Brigade reported that the line had been broken, and the 9th was ordered forward to counter-attack. A patrol was sent forward under Second-Lieutenant W. Broughton, who reached the front line, but was shot through the chest, his corporal being killed. Lieutenant Broughton reported on his return that the enemy had made a determined attack, but had been beaten off, though a slight readjustment of the line was necessary. The situation being in hand, the 9th returned to their reserve positions at noon.

The success of the enemy near Neuve Eglise and his advance from "Plugstreet" towards Nieppe endangered our left flank. At 1 p.m. the companies advanced in extended order to a line through Papot to La Rue Du Sac, facing north-east, with posts thrown forward. The enemy had captured trenches in the Nieppe system, and forced a gap between the 102nd Brigade and the 25th Division, but a counter-attack held the enemy at Les Trois Pipes.



This advance, combined with the capture of Steenwerck station during the afternoon, rendered untenable the position of the Division round Nieppe. A further withdrawal was ordered, the 9th Battalion to retire in conjunction with the 102nd Brigade. "A" Company acted as a covering party for troops in front; "B," "C," and "D" Companies acted as flank-and-rearguard for the Brigade. The main road was full of troops, and it appeared to be a hopeless task trying to separate the entangled units; but they were in their positions at the west end of La Crêche before dawn. Enemy shelling had lengthened in range, following the troops; and one 5.9 shell burst just behind the personnel of Battalion Headquarters, killing Major J. S. Allen, M.C., Sergeant Stafford, and six other ranks, while six or seven others were wounded.

Guides met the battalion in La Crêche, and led the 9th to a new position north of the village, but some time was spent in getting the companies together. At 1.35 a.m. (12th April) new orders were received, and the Brigade took up a line in reserve from the main Bailleul road to the railway at the west end of La Crêche, facing south-west. At this time, midnight 11th/12th, the battle line was Festubert, Givenchy, Lawe River, Pacaut, west of Merville, Neuf Berquin, Le Verrier, La Becque, south of La Crêche, Pont d'Achelles, east of Neuve Eglise, Wulverghem, Wytschaete, Hollebeke. The line was held from right to left—Bailleul to Neuve Eglise—by 147th, 75th, 101st, 74th, 102nd, and 88th Brigades, with 103rd in reserve.

Throughout the battle the enemy had set farms on fire, and the sky was constantly lit by these beacons. Refugees were streaming along the roads, and in the farm allotted to Battalion Headquarters on the main road were many old men and women from the forward areas. They were dazed beyond comprehension of ordinary things, and sat up all night.

The new position was partially entrenched, and as the companies arrived the men lay down to sleep. Rations and ammunition were dumped at Brigade Headquarters, another tribute to the resource of our transport. The lines had moved daily, there had been many narrow escapes from capture, but not once did the transport fail in its duties.

Morning of the 12th saw the battle continued with unvarying intensity, but with varying success. The battalion area was again heavily shelled. A break through the British line between Doulieu and La Becque caused anxiety for the safety of Bailleul, and at 5.45 p.m. orders were received to move to the high ground

south-east and east of Bailleul to cover the roads east of that town, joining up with the right of the 147th Brigade at Bailleul Station. This move was carried out through heavy shelling, tear-gas causing considerable distress.

The Commanding Officer was told to report to the 101st Brigade (the Battalion being under their orders) and set off about 9 p.m. Gas was still plentiful, but, as it was very dark, the risk of removing gas-masks had to be taken. On reaching Brigade Headquarters a weird ceremony was enacted. Silently the door was unlocked, and, in dead silence, the guide led the party along a dark passage to a room at the back. Not a word was spoken, and the air of conspiracy was intensified by the strange figures sitting in the room. Every one wore a gas-mask, and by the flickering light of two candles the figures looked like a group of Venetian Doges! The guide had been the Staff Captain; the head of the conclave was General Gore (General Officer Commanding 101st Brigade), a fine soldier who was killed a few days later. Our new orders were to watch the approaches west of Bailleul, and three companies were moved accordingly to guard these; "A" Company was held in reserve with Battalion Headquarters at the west end of the Ravelberg road, in a huttet camp, previously used as a hospital.

The retreat had not been without some compensations. This huttet camp provided a good supply of Oxo cubes and other stores. Earlier in the day a broken wagon had been found abandoned. Many of the men obtained new uniforms; while one officer "souvenired" a pair of riding breeches, which, by their cut and shade, demonstrated good taste on the part of the Royal Field Artillery officer who once had owned them. There was much other stuff available, but pyjamas were at that moment rather at a discount.

A quiet night was spent; rather that small remaining portion of it after the moves were complete! Between 9 and 10 a.m. 13th April, the situation round Bailleul having cleared, companies were withdrawn, but "D" Company could not leave Steam Mill until relieved at night. Preparations for a further withdrawal were made, the enemy having entered Neuve Eglise, where desperate fighting was in progress. Battalion Headquarters was shelled heavily, and Captain R. V. L. Dallas, M.C., was killed, and Captain Patten, M.C., wounded; the latter, however, remaining on duty. Captain Dallas, who had but recently taken up duties as Second-in-Command, had endeared himself to everyone in the battalion; his passing was keenly felt.

Repeated attacks were made on the tired but stubborn troops. Gaps were forced, only to be filled by reserves. During the evening a heavy attack broke through between La Crêche and Neuve Eglise, threatening the left of the Division. Accordingly, following orders previously issued, "A" and "B" Companies moved forward to a position at the base of the hill at Crucifix Corner into trenches recently dug by the 18th (Pioneer) Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers, "C" and "D" being in reserve on the reverse slope. On the hill were mixed parties of Cheshires and Worcesters. It was a cold outpost duty, snow showers adding to the discomfort.

The situation was not clear; but it was obvious that it was nearly desperate. Then came Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig's now historical Special Order:

"Three weeks ago to-day the enemy began his terrific attacks against us on a fifty mile front. His objects are to separate us from the French, to take the Channel Ports and destroy the British Army.

"In spite of throwing 106 Divisions into the battle, and enduring the most reckless sacrifice of human life, he has as yet made little progress towards his goals. We owe this to the determined fighting and self-sacrifice of our troops.

"Words fail me to express the admiration which I feel for the splendid resistance offered by all ranks of our Army under the most trying circumstances.

"Many amongst us now are tired. To these I would say that victory will belong to the side which holds out the longest.

"The French Army is moving rapidly and in great strength to our support.

"There is no other course open to us but to fight it out. Every position must be held to the last man; there must be no retirement. With our backs to the wall, and believing in the justice of our cause, each one of us must fight to the end.

"The safety of our homes and the freedom of mankind depend alike upon the conduct of each one of us at this critical moment."

To this call the 9th Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers responded. Their time had again come to bear the brunt. At 4.15 a.m. on the 14th April the enemy barrage fell, heavies being largely used: the whole of the forward positions shook; the noise was deafening. Headquarters with "C" and "D" Companies pushed forward to support "A" and "B." Wounded men were coming down the hill, including men from the fighting about

Neuve Eglise. Realizing that the enemy were nearing the crest of the hill, and as it seemed probable from the number of stragglers about that the 71st Brigade on our left had given way, "C" Company was ordered to move round the left of the hill to support "A," while "D" Company not having come up, a party of Battalion Headquarters under Second-Lieutenant W. H. Corner and Acting Regimental Sergeant-Major Richardson, were ordered to advance directly over the hill and counter-attack the enemy.

This was successfully carried out, our party meeting the enemy, who had broken through our posts, just over the crest, driving him down, killing a number, and capturing a machine-gun. Second-Lieutenant Corner was wounded, but wrote a full report ere proceeding to the Dressing Station.

The two companies ("A" and "B") at the foot of the hill had been engaged in a desperate fight. On the right one platoon of "B" Company under Captain C. Davies was heavily attacked at the Inn, and, though the enemy was driven off, every man was either killed or wounded, and no account of what actually happened has been obtained. "Every position must be held to the last man."

On the left of "B" Company at the foot of the hill was a huddled camp, surrounded by a strengthened wire fence on the north side. The enemy obtained a firm footing in this camp. He was twice counter-attacked by the remainder of "B" Company, Captain Patten being killed leading the second. All the other officers being casualties, Acting Company-Sergeant-Major Hardman, D.C.M., took over command, and led a third counter-attack, which was repulsed with heavy losses. Company-Sergeant-Major Hardman and Sergeant Lumley then gathered the survivors—some thirty men only—and in the half-light worked up the hill a little to get above the camp. The leader then addressed his men. "We've got to get the Boche out, so this time we'll give a hell of a shout and make him think there are more of us than there are."

So, for the fourth time, the survivors of this most gallant company charged down upon the enemy, yelling their hardest. The ruse succeeded, the enemy retiring in confusion. Seeing this, our men lay down and opened rapid fire, killing several Boches, including an officer. Thus was "B" Company's position cleared; and at once, from this small party, patrols were sent out to get into touch with "A" Company. "There is no other course open to us but to fight it out." Such was the response of "B"

Company, 9th Northumberland Fusiliers, to the Commander-in-Chief's call!

As with "B," so with "A." The enemy had entered a number of their posts, and by sheer weight of numbers drove in the right of the company, and pressed up the hill. The remainder of "A" Company, led by Lieutenant H. S. Rowe, left their trenches, counter-attacked across the open, continued with a severe fight in some old bayonet-fighting trenches, and finally ejected the enemy. All the officers were casualties, except Second-Lieutenant J. L. Baker, who took command.

The Hill was rapidly cleared of the invader, and several unwounded prisoners were taken.

Losses were very severe, and included Captain Patten killed, Captain Davis severely wounded (he died two days later), Second-Lieutenant Borland killed, Lieutenants H. S. Rowe and F. G. Smith, and Second-Lieutenant G. D. Young wounded. "C" Company and Battalion Headquarters also suffered.

During the day the enemy could be seen moving about at the south-west end of Neuve Eglise; stragglers from the morning attack were observed endeavouring to get back under cover. Attacks had developed about Neuve Eglise, and at Mont de Lille. The remainder of the morning was quiet on our front, but at 5 p.m. another shell-storm swept the hill. Under cover of it the enemy advanced to the attack, but the assault melted away before it reached our posts. The Boche could not face the rifle fire. Generally, the line remained stable throughout the day, and the night was fairly quiet.

During the night 14th/15th the 34th Division was relieved, the 9th Battalion by a company of the 2nd/4th Lincolns (59th Division) and a company of Norfolk (49th Division). Great difficulty was experienced with this relief, the units relieving apparently failing to realize that they had an area to take over. The relief was finally accomplished by about 9 a.m., and there followed a long trek to Hille, near Koudeket.

The troops were considerably elated at the sight of the field-kitchens puffing a welcome! For the first time since the 1st of the month there was a good meal. The chance of an undisturbed sleep made all realize, however, how far through they were. Since the battle began, sleep had been possible only in short snatches, seldom longer than an hour. In Headquarters a canary sang lustily, for a British soldier had fed and watered it before attending to his own needs. The inhabitants had all fled.

The "rest" was of short duration. At 3 p.m. warning was

received that the 59th Division was being heavily attacked, and that some retirement from Crucifix Corner was observed. Accordingly "C" and "D" Companies moved forward to Hill 50, south-west of Keersebrom, to cover any withdrawal. An hour later we were told that the whole of the 59th Division was engaged, and the 9th was to be held in readiness. The enemy had brought up fresh troops, including the Alpine Corps, and had gained the hill at Crucifix Corner. "B" Company was detailed to support the Lincolns. The companies on Hill 50 reported themselves in touch with the defenders.

On the right of "D" Company the Headquarters of the 2nd/5th Lincolns, including the Commanding Officer and Adjutant, held the line. Orders were sent to "C" and "D" to hold on at all costs, to give time to the 59th Division to get through and to avoid a daylight withdrawal. The 177th Brigade was endeavouring to build up a line on the right of these companies. The enemy was definitely held by "C" and "D," though due west of "D" Company it appeared that the enemy had entered Bailleul.

Battalions holding the line were ordered to send out patrols five hundred yards to the south to cover the withdrawal of the 59th through our lines; "C" and "D" Companies were to withdraw with their patrols after the 59th had passed through. By 1.50 a.m. (16th April) all the 59th Division had withdrawn, and our companies followed without interference, completing the movement by 3.30 a.m. Four hours later, in response to a message from the depleted 2nd Worcesters, on the left of the 103rd Brigade, "A" Company moved into support of their right, where "B" Company still had one platoon.

At 1 p.m. another heavy bombardment of our positions began, and lasted all the afternoon. Enemy troops worked their way forward, and at 4.30 p.m. were seen coming, in large numbers, down the slopes of Hill 50. The 2nd Worcesters were driven in, but a message from Lieutenant Baker, "A" Company, stated that he would hold on. A counter-attack was asked for by the Worcesters, and "C" Company advanced, with "D" on the right, "B" joining in. It should be remembered that these men were weary; they were mud-covered, and some were hardly able to move, so dazed were they from lack of sleep. Yet they gallantly went forward, drove the enemy down the hill and re-established the position. Virtually walking in their sleep, they routed fresh troops, but the casualties were heavy, amongst them being Lieutenant H. S. Fitzgerald, who had been transferred to command "B" Company after the fighting at Crucifix Corner.

During the night the battalion was reorganized: "A" Company took over the posts previously held by the 2nd Worcesters, with "C" Company in support; "B" Company was in its previous position; "D" Company in reserve. When this disposition was made by 2 a.m. 17th April, the only reserve to the Brigade was the depleted "D" Company with only one officer! An appeal for supports was at first refused by Divisional Headquarters, but at about 7.15 a.m. a message was received stating that "Y" and "Z" Companies of the 2nd Hants were being sent forward.

In the meanwhile the day's fighting had been heralded by another intense barrage. One cannot but admire the transport arrangements of the enemy which kept up the enormous supply of ammunition. But on this day our artillery support was excellent. A number of French batteries of the famous "75's" had galloped into action to the accompaniment of shouts of "Vive la France." A hasty glance, so the tale runs, at an old 1/100,000 map, and the "barkers" began their great mission! What if they *did* fire a few short into our posts! At any rate "Fritz across the way" got more than he bargained for, and the attack was broken up.

This surprise packet got a full reply from the enemy. The bombardment was heavy on the posts, and for miles behind. Probably the Boche began to realize that his schemes were not progressing favourably. In moving up to support the left flank of the 10th Lincolns, "D" Company, the sole reserve, lost their last officer, Lieutenant E. B. L. Piggott wounded, Sergeant Oxlee taking over command. Communications were good all day, the signallers working devotedly.

An attack at noon was beaten off. A little before dusk, following a period of concentrated artillery fire, another attack was launched by the enemy. This fared no better. Casualties were heavy, as the enemy was relying on guns of large calibre. The men, despite their exhaustion after nine days of continuous fighting and marching, stuck to their positions and used their rifles with deadly effect whenever the enemy appeared.

Soon after dark the Brigade was relieved by the 88th Brigade, and the battalion moved to what was known as the Army Line, occupying scattered trenches and shelters. With the defeat of the enemy on the 17th there was a lull in the fighting, and the Brigade was held as a support to the centre and left sectors, the 9th Battalion being especially detailed for the left. The men busied themselves improving their trenches, getting straw for

beds, and then tidying themselves. A few hours of sleep, and they appeared to have recovered somewhat from their fatigue.

At dawn on the 19th and 20th the battalion stood to, but the enemy contented himself with spasmodic shelling, and no serious attacks took place. At Headquarters there was a tub of excellent salt butter; in addition, in the farmyard, was a litter of sucking pigs, the mother being a casualty—how or why is not stated. The number of piglets is given variously, the official account saying thirteen. These were handed over to the Belgian authorities—still quoting the *official* account!—and one was presented to Headquarters for the trouble taken, and it formed the *pièce de résistance* at their first meal after the relief. Another account of this episode gives a bigger total, and describes what happened to the *four* biggest that were, after much juggling and squealing, knocked on the head at the transport lines. Headquarters Mess was not the only one with a sucking pig as the *pièce de résistance*.

The 133rd French Division relieved the 34th Division on the night of 20th/21st, our Headquarters being taken over by Colonel Bornéqué, aptly described by one of his own officers as *un vieux guerrier*. We were much impressed by the extreme smartness of the French troops. The 9th Battalion moved at 4 a.m. via Mont Noir to Boeschepe Camp. As there was only one road available for the Division, delay was considerable, and dawn broke before we reached the crest of the hill. Mont Noir had been receiving attention from the enemy during the preceding days, and the slow crawl over the abominable road was most nerve-racking, but eventually the battalion got safely over the top and reached Boeschepe. What a relief for most to get a bath and a change of clothing. Three weeks without a change had brought on the condition usually described as “chatty.”

On the 22nd April the battalion marched to School Camp at St. Jan Ter Biezen, west-north-west of Poperinghe, where the Brigade was concentrated in huts. Two days were spent in cleaning up, and in erecting protection round the huts. Enemy planes had a habit of bombing nightly in the area.

St. George's Day was celebrated, all ranks sporting the red-and-white roses. The Brigade was inspected by Major-General Nicholson, who addressed the troops on parade. He read messages from General Sir Herbert Plumer commanding the Second Army, and Lieutenant-General Sir A. Hamilton-Gordon commanding the IX Corps. These leaders expressed their admiration of the gallantry shown by all ranks during the nine days of continuous fighting. To their congratulations, Major-General Nicholson

added his own, affirming his great confidence and affectionate pride in the Division.

Two days later, working parties had gone to the east Poperinghe Line, but were recalled at 1 p.m. The enemy had attacked Kemmel Hill and secured a footing; by night the Hill was captured, and the invaders, despite strenuous French resistance, were pushing on to Locre. Our troops were not called into action, but moved next day to a camp east of Poperinghe on the Ypres road, and worked on the new defences, chiefly breastworks. The Ypres road was full of transport; and some carefully covered limbers westward bound must have had strange loads. The sounds emitted were suspiciously like the grunting of pigs!

At 3 p.m. on the 26th the battalion moved forward again, this time to the Brandhoek Line, a series of breastworks nearing completion. This system crossed the main road at the western end of the village and ran towards La Clytte. Advance parties went forward to get into touch with the 41st and 6th Divisions holding the line east of Ypres. During the day Kemmel Village had been retaken by the French and British, but could not be held; the French regained Locre.

As the civilians still remained in the Brandhoek area, no houses were available. A dump of ammunition, however, exploded during the 27th April, and tiles flew about in all directions. This caused a stampede of the civilians, and many houses were then "To let." An officer had been instructed to secure a nearby house; but, waiting to finish his tea, he found that the claim had been jumped by some gunners! At night the battalion was relieved by the 22nd Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers, and returned to School Camp, where a quiet day was spent.

Next day the battalion moved again, this time to billets in farms south of Oost Cappell, half-way between Poperinghe and Bergues. It was comforting here, almost out of sound of the guns, to be informed that the enemy attack on the Belgians had failed; that his attempt to gain the Scherpenberg from the French had ended in another disaster; that his massed formations had melted under the rifle fire of the British. April ended with the result fairly certain—the push for the Channel Ports had been stopped.

CHAPTER XV

MORE TRAINING: MAY 1918—JULY 1918

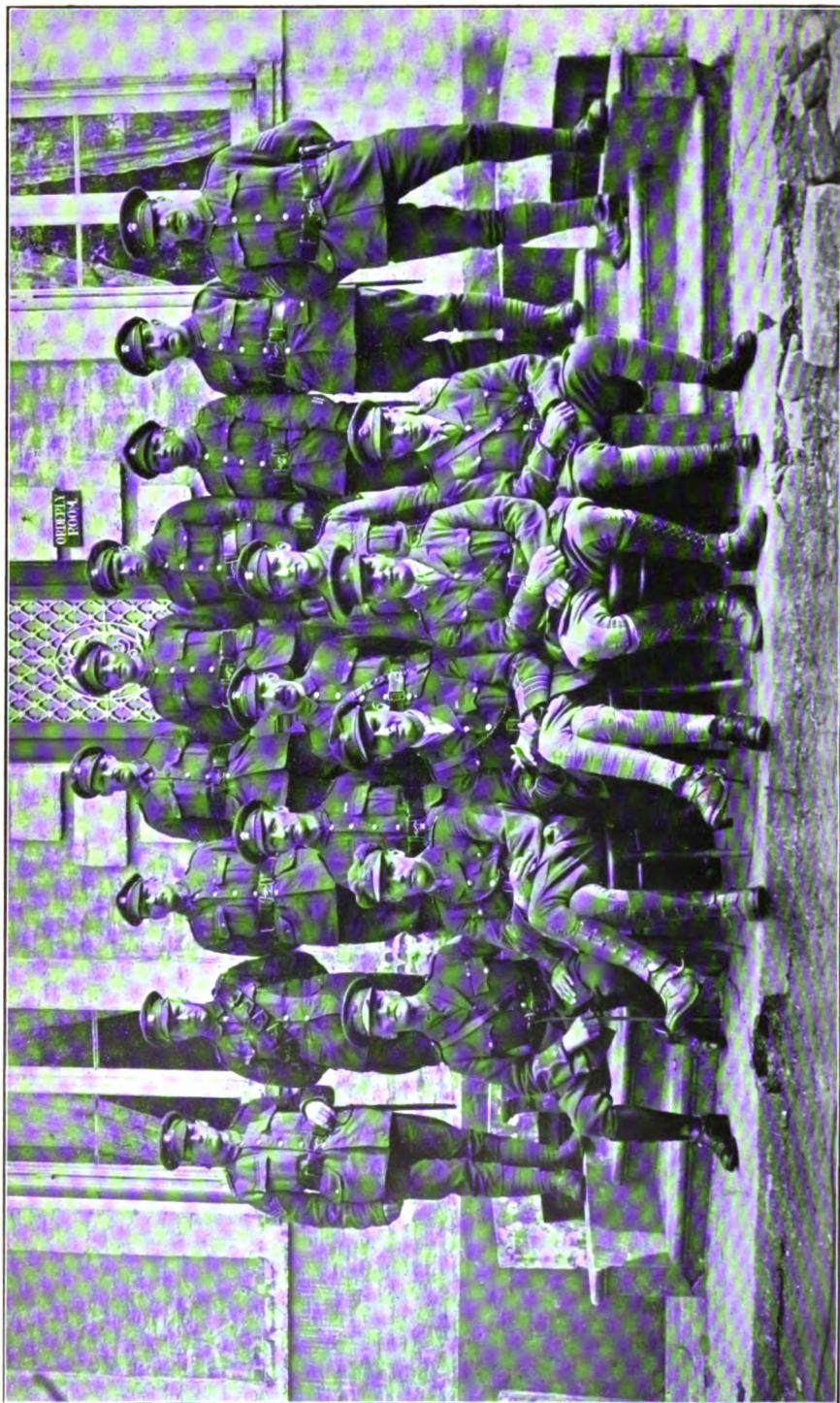
THE battalion rested in billets at or near Oost Cappell. This Belgian village had not suffered from shell-fire, and all the troops were quite comfortable. Many Belgian troops were in the vicinity, and we were much impressed by their smartness and discipline. Several times a day a sort of patrol passed through the village, and played quaint marching tunes on a species of cavalry trumpet. Numbers of French troops passed forward; many were "75" batteries, with motor transport. Each gun was carried on a lorry, the muzzle sticking through the driver's cab, just clear of his head. One heavy battery (155 mm. high velocity) had made the journey from the Vosges to Poperinghe, a distance of nine hundred kilometres, in seven days.

After the stress of the previous month, the Belgian maids were good to look upon. We doubt if, at this moment, a second glance would be given to 99·9 per cent. of them—but that is a psychological problem. The Padre made a capture—oh, no, the scene has changed!—by lorry-jumping to Bergues and securing a fine, full-flavoured Roquefort cheese to replace one captured by the enemy.

On the 2nd May the battalion moved into billets and tents about one thousand five hundred yards south-west of St. Jan Ter Biezen, west of Poperinghe. The front line in this sector had been stabilized, and ran from near Meteren, north of Bailleul, Locre, south of the Scherpenberg, Vierstraat, Voormezeele, and thence about a thousand yards east of Ypres. "Wipers" still remained in British hands. French troops held the line from just north of Bailleul to Vierstraat. Work in this area was the digging of trenches, the 9th Battalion being, with other units, employed on a switch line from Abeele to Poperinghe.

No drafts had replaced the losses of March and April; the Divisional strength was small, and the 9th had only some two hundred to three hundred men available. Yet the 34th Division was held as reserve to the British Army near Ypres, and to the

LIEUT.-COL. VIGNOLIS WITH "ORIGINALS" OF THE BATTALION, MAY, 1918.



French farther south. On the 5th May the battalion moved to the east Poperinghe Line, south of the Ypres-Poperinghe road, and provided nucleus garrisons. The men were in shelters—a pantechnicon phrase!—while Battalion Headquarters were established in a small house. Around this fairly decent spot were some shell craters big enough to hold a haystack. Several splinters had hit the house, but not much damage had been done. The piano, at any rate, was intact. During the short stay another shell landed in the radish bed. Luckily it was a dud, or the piano and some of the temporary pianists might not have remained intact.

A move to the right sector of the east Poperinghe Line was made on the 7th, the while the French artillery was active, firing for nearly eighteen hours, "drum-fire" at times. Fritz had made other abortive attacks on the Scherpenberg. A battery of 155 mm. long-range guns was in position close to Battalion Headquarters, and each salvo rattled all movable articles off the shelves in camp, while the farm behind shed bits at each discharge. Visits were exchanged with our Allies (3^e Batterie, 88^e Art^e. Lourde), and the complimentary dinners were much enjoyed. The Padre again lorry-jumped to get special fare—this time the tit-bit being plaice.

Work continued on the trenches, the while the French artillery gave the enemy something to face. Matters were steadyng down; the Hun had shot his bolt in this area, and on the 12th May the battalion marched to a huddled camp at Houtkerque. Next day at 4.30 a.m. the journey was continued by motor-bus to Seninghem, about six kilometres west of Lumbres. The rest had arrived; the men, comfortably billeted in farms, were well received by the inhabitants, who showed their gratitude for the part played by the 34th Division.

It was an anxious time, however, for the fate of the battalion hung in the balance. For some little time the knowledge was common property that several battalions were to be reduced to cadres. No reserves were available to fill up the gaps caused by the heavy fighting. With joy we heard that the 9th Battalion was to remain as a fighting unit, along with the 1st East Lancs and the 11th Suffolks. All other battalions of the mighty 34th Division were to be reduced to cadre strength and surplus personnel sent to the Base. The cadre Division was to be attached *pro tem.* to American Divisions, recently landed in France to complete their final training.

A further move was undertaken by route march to Bouron-

ville, seventeen kilometres east of Boulogne. Here Lieut.-Colonel W. A. Vignoles, D.S.O., took over temporary command of the 103rd Brigade during the absence on leave of the Brigadier, Major I. G. C. Brady, M.C., commanding the 9th Battalion. Headquarters were established in the Château of Monsieur de Marissal, late Major of Artillery in the Belgian Army, who had fought through the siege of Liège. He, his wife and two daughters received us very charmingly, and provided the Mess with lunch, the two girls waiting on the officers.

The next ten days were spent in training, and on the 19th the Commanding Officer came over from Brigade Headquarters to present medal ribbons to those who had earned them. All the awards were read out; but many gallant men did not answer to their names. They had answered the great call. Major Brady was somewhat perturbed as Madame de Marissal wished to present a bouquet to the Commanding Officer on parade. With a mixture of his best French and most charming tact he dissuaded her. "It is not done, madame."

The General Officer Commanding 34th Division (General Nicholson) inspected the battalion on the 22nd, and addressed the parade. In the recent fighting, he said, the battalion had maintained the very high traditions of the famous regiment to which it belonged, and, as the 9th was shortly to be transferred to another Division, he wished all of them God-speed and good luck. The Commanding Officer, specially over for the day, replied and called for three cheers for the General. A march past in columns concluded the ceremony. It was a sad parting with a fine leader, of whom the whole battalion was very proud.

General Nicholson, however, came to see us off when, on 26th May, the battalion entrained at Desvres *en route* to join the 61st (2nd South Midland) Division. We detrained at Aire and marched to La Lacque camp, to the east of that town. On the 28th, a draft of 20 officers and 430 other ranks arrived, the men being mostly surplus personnel from the reduced battalions of the 34th Division. Lieutenant E. G. Bates, M.C., who had been attached to Divisional Headquarters, also returned to the battalion. The 9th Northumberland Fusiliers, 11th Suffolks, and 1st East Lancs formed the 183rd Brigade under Brigadier-General A. H. Spooner, C.M.G., D.S.O.; about this time, Major-General Colin Mackenzie being wounded, the command of the Division was taken over by Major-General Duncan, C.M.G., D.S.O., promoted from a Brigade in the 55th Division.

June opened with the training of the troops continuing in a

disused aerodrome not far from La Lacque Camp. Weather was hot and fine, and "C" Company organized some swimming and diving contests. The influx of so many officers caused a shortage of kit in the company messes. Various expedients were tried, but surely the young "sub" who tackled the Quartermaster was strangely misguided. The Quartermaster, with thirty-two years' service with the "Old and Bold," was busy in the store, when the subaltern entered and said: "Oh, I say, Quarter, have you any knives or crockery you could sell me?" The Quartermaster looked up, a bit nettled at being taken for a chinaware merchant, then said sweetly, "I'm sorry, but do you know I am sold clean out of everything except camisoles!"

Our only worry at La Lacque was a high-velocity gun, which dropped a large shell at intervals, just short of the camp. A high-velocity shell was a terror, for the huge missile arrived before its own sound, the whistle following on. It was rather disconcerting, this explosion coming out of apparently nowhere. For some reason the Hun seemed unable to reach the railway or camp; a fortunate mischance. At nights planes were busy, but no bombs fell on the camp. Aire had suffered badly from bombs and long-range shells, but many inhabitants still remained. Round the district large numbers of men were throwing up defensive breastworks.

After Church Parade on the 2nd June the battalion marched to billets at Ham-en-Artois, Battalion Headquarters being in the old abbey near the church. There was much oak panelling, but it had been badly restored with deal. The gardens were delightful, surrounded by high stone walls. Unfortunately the strawberries were not ripe. Each night a number of women and children were accommodated in the large cellars as a protection from aeroplane bombs.

The weather remained fine, and specialist training was carried out. At 9.30 a.m. on the 8th, Brigadier-General Spooner inspected the battalion, and presented sixteen Cards of Honour for gallantry in the field. In addressing the men, the General emphasized the fact that a Card of Honour in this war was in many cases equivalent to a Victoria Cross in other wars.

The Church Parade next day was held under the shade of the trees in the abbey grounds. In the evening the battalion marched to billets at Hamet Billet, south-west of St. Venant. This was Brigade Reserve, some six thousand yards behind our front line posts. The 61st Division had come into this area towards the end of the Battle of the Lys, and had been holding

the line ever since—a line of isolated posts with a connecting breastwork in process of construction. No communication trenches existed, so it was not possible to visit the line by daylight, the area being absolutely flat.

Training continued, and matters were quiet. Care was exercised in screening the troops from enemy observation. At night, 14th June, the battalion relieved the 1st East Lancs as the right battalion in the Brigade sub-sector; the 183rd Brigade was on the left of the Divisional front, joining up with the 5th Division. These two Divisions were in the XI Corps (Lieutenant-General Sir Robert Haking), which held the line opposite the extreme point of the enemy salient round Merville. Our Headquarters were in a farm at La Haye.

The enemy was fairly quiet during this tour (15th to 21st June), and showed signs of nervousness. He was guessing at the Allies' intentions, and the guessing kept him busy, but uncertain. His artillery spread their shells about somewhat, but with the isolated posts casualties were almost nil. Generally his machine-gun fire was spasmodic, and no trench-mortars were used. Our patrols had almost complete command in No Man's Land. When the patrols entered his posts it was to find them vacated. Nights were short, of course, and this made the rationing of the front line a matter of urgency. The ration parties were continually fired at.

Relieved on the 21st by the 11th Suffolks, the battalion took over the old billets at Hamet Billet, and stayed there training until 26th. Influenza was rife, and men went sick in large batches; while some companies had only one officer left for duty. So full were the Clearing Stations and hospitals that battalions had to make local arrangements to deal with mild cases. The Commanding Officer went to the XI Corps School on a short course, but was down with 'flu; his batman also joined the sick list and remarked that they were a fine pair to go on a course. Major D. R. Osborne commanded the battalion during the Commanding Officer's absence.

The move back to the line took place on the 26th, relieving the 1st East Lancs in front of St. Floris. The tour was quiet, the snipers only being active. They must have been off form, for they caused no casualties; as a matter of fact, the enemy, from prisoners' reports, appeared to be suffering from influenza even more than the British.

This tour ended on the 4th July, and the battalion returned to the Reserve billets, and provided working parties. A week

later the 61st Division was relieved by the 74th Division, our battalion handing over Hamet Billet to the 24th Battalion Welch Regiment, and moving out to St. Hilaire on the main road due south of Aire. The 61st Division was now in General Headquarters Reserve. At about this time the Fifth Army was reconstituted under General Birdwood and the XI Corps passed under his command. On the 14th, General Birdwood attended Church Parade and addressed the battalion afterwards.

Three days later another move took place, a route march to Liettres, four miles south-west of Aire, and training was carried out north of Linghem. At this period it was known that the enemy had assembled some thirty Divisions on the Ypres and Lys fronts under Prince Ruprecht of Bavaria, probably intending to attack north of the Nieppe Forest. The Commanding Officer and Company Commanders reconnoitred the ground in readiness.

As part of the General Headquarters scheme the 61st Division was transferred to the XV Corps, Second Army, and the battalion marched, on the 22nd, to La Sablonière, south-east of Blendecques, into good billets. Here a visit was paid by Colonel Sturges, an officer of the Fifth in the Boer War. He had heard the Regimental Call and had promptly set out to investigate. At the time he was in command of the XI Corps Officers' Rest Station at Lapré Château.

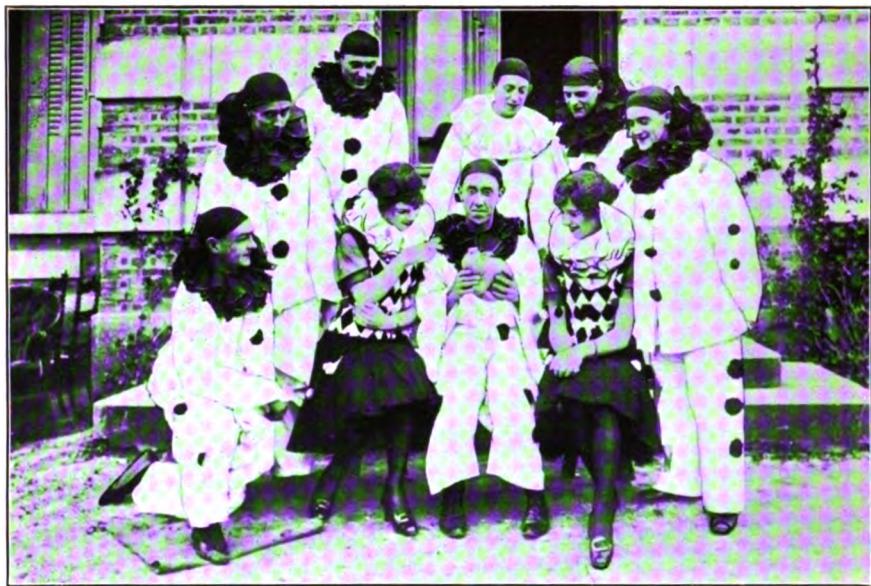
Training was energetically carried out, many reconnaissances made, and schemes of "open warfare" performed. The lessons learnt in March and April were driven home; and, though out of the line, it cannot be said that it was an easy time. In fact, it was an all-day job for everyone, and the discussions were carried on after Mess. The last day of the month saw a further move, by night, to Norrent Fontes, the Division having been transferred to the XI Corps, Fifth Army, in General Headquarters Reserve.

During this month the battalion had been out of the line for twenty days, but they were days of strenuous training to maintain the 9th at its high state of efficiency. Bad weather, three moves—each involving finding and studying new areas—the absence of senior officers on vital reconnaissances, all tended to make the time devoted to training relatively short, and somewhat hectic. Hard work by all ranks resulted in the battalion being restored to its former efficiency: the new men were assimilated and the 9th was again ready.

It was a worrying time for the senior officers, owing to the doubt existing as to the enemy's moves. Several schemes of action

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had to be worked out and the routes reconnoitred; but there was always the anxiety of uncertainty. On the 15th July, however, the enemy's great attack against the French at Rheims was broken, and our Allies began their counter-offensive between Château Thierry and Soissons. This caused a withdrawal of some of Prince Ruprecht's Divisions in Reserve from the Lys front, and the danger of attack here gradually diminished. Signs were clear, too, that the British Army was ready, for the 9th Division recaptured Meteren and an Australian Division recaptured Merris without serious opposition. The tide was turning, and Marshal Foch's hammer blows were about to fall on the enemy.



61ST DIVISION CONCERT PARTY.



"SUSY AND ALICE."
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Facing p. 104.

CHAPTER XVI

THE GREAT ADVANCE: AUGUST 1918—SEPTEMBER 1918

MAY, June and July were, after the critical months of March and April, comparatively quiet, though activities ceaselessly continued. Drafts had been received and worked into the unity of battalions. New defences were made—some five thousand miles of trench being dug—and many new railways were built. Amiens, Bethune and Hazebrouck, well-used railway junctions, were too close to the battle line to be of much use, and separate routes had to be constructed to facilitate the rapid and, so far as possible, secret movement of troops. Minor operations were conducted to prepare for the great British and French offensive: American troops were arriving in strength in France, and a gigantic bluff was worked on the enemy in Flanders. By ostentatious work, erection of new hospitals, etc., the Hun was led to believe that the first stroke was coming on that front.

Briefly, that was the situation at the beginning of August, 1918, four years after the opening of the war. The 9th Battalion remained at Fontes until the 6th, training carefully, and on that day moved forward to Arcade Camp in Nieppe Forest, arriving there at 9.30 p.m. Next day was quiet, the troops resting and cleaning up, but ready to move forward at short notice. This order arrived at 1 a.m. on the 9th and the battalion at once advanced to the vicinity of Caudescure Station, into support trenches, Headquarters being near the station. At midnight of the 9th "B" and "C" Companies were to carry out a minor operation, involving the crossing of the river Plate Becque and the securing of the bridge-head. The operation was postponed by later order to 3 a.m. 10th August.

At that hour "C" Company crossed the bridge they had put into position and moved forward a short distance through the crops. Heavy machine-gun fire was opened on them, and the company was withdrawn under heavy fire, trench mortars and gas-shells being added to the machine-gun fire. The enemy was very much alert, and likely to dispute any crossing. "B" Company then essayed the attempt, Nos. 5 and 8 platoons being engaged.

Again the enemy concentrated machine-gun fire on the advancing troops and stayed their progress. It was about 5.30 a.m. before the last of the wounded were got away. At night the battalion marched back to Arcade Camp.

Four days later the companies moved forward on a light railway from Crowe to Meredith Station, and took over the front line from 2nd/6th Royal Warwicks and 2nd/4th Royal Berks (184th Brigade). Battalion Headquarters were near Caudescure Station, with "A" Company on the right front, "B" Company left front, supported respectively by "C" and "D" Companies. The 1st East Lancs were on our left. Shelling was heavy, and continued so, the enemy being in a highly nervous state, consequent on the Allied successes on the Ancre and the old Somme battlefield. The 15th August was a sad day for the battalion, for the Commanding Officer, Lieutenant-Colonel W. A. Vignoles, D.S.O., was sent to the 11th Corps Officers' Rest Station, and he did not rejoin the 9th Battalion. The strain of the March and April fighting on the Somme and on the Lys battlefields had left his health seriously impaired. He had not spared himself; he was ever to the front, directing and encouraging his men, taking much more than the average share of risks; his work was highly praised by higher commands, but the greatest tribute was that paid to him by the men. The magnificent gallantry of the 9th Battalion was their homage to a fearless leader. Men have often said they would go through hell for their officers; the fighters of his battalion went through hell, with, and for, their Colonel—a nine days hell, on the Lys.

The Commanding Officer should have rested, but with his great zeal he again did not spare himself—or his troops!—in the great effort to bring the shattered battalion back to its old efficiency. It was again a fine fighting force when he had to hand over and take a rest. Major A. Ebsworth, M.C., Second-in-Command, took over the battalion on 15th August.

During this tour in the line, enemy shelling was fairly heavy, and the area round Battalion Headquarters received much attention. Our patrols were busy, but could find no practicable bridge over the Plate Becque. The enemy had sited trenches covering the remnants of the broken bridges, and it would have been possible to dislodge the Hun only by a considerable artillery preparation. This was not asked for, as signs were many that the anticipated withdrawal of the enemy was about to take place. He had to shorten his line; and the dangerous Lys Salient was likely to be his first decision.

An explosion, not caused by shell-fire, occurred in Merville on the 18th, probably a dump, or a bridge or a cross-road being blown up preparatory to retirement. "A" and "B" Companies were ordered at 2.30 p.m. to push forward patrols over the river, "A" Company to a triangular enclosure and "B" to a house over the Plate Becque and to develop an attack northward from the house. About 3.30 p.m. Captain Freshwater reported "A" Company had reached its objective, and captured eight of the enemy with one machine-gun. An hour later Captain G. M. L. Logie reported that No. 5 platoon, commanded by Lieutenant J. L. Baker, M.C., had successfully crossed the river, taken its objective, and in addition Rennet Farm, securing thirty-eight prisoners and four machine-guns. Two other platoons of "B" Company were then pushed across the river to reinforce No. 5, while "A" Company advanced their posts to cover the ground taken on their frontage. The battalion was to have been relieved by the 11th Suffolks that night, but, owing to the nature of the operations in progress, the relief was cancelled.

The details of the attack by No. 5 platoon are interesting. Taking cover under a hedge and a ditch, one section rushed a sunken barge in the river. This was an enemy machine-gun post, and the first man to rush was killed by the only shot the enemy was allowed to fire ere being captured. From the barge, the same section rushed a house on the far side of the river, again capturing a machine-gun team, this time without any casualties. The platoon riflemen, about a dozen strong, worked their way along a hedge in the rear of the enemy's left flank, and rushed into the open towards the enemy trench. This move from their rear so surprised the Germans that they immediately surrendered. Rennet Farm, about sixty yards in the rear of the enemy's right flank, held two gun teams and was causing much havoc. Six men of No. 5 platoon rushed to attack it, and timely aid was given by one of our low-flying planes. The enemy surrendered. Only about a dozen men of the platoon were left, and they were in a precarious position when they were reinforced by their comrades of "B" Company. A neat exploit.

Next day at 9.55 a.m. a message from Brigade Headquarters ordered patrols to be sent out to the road Rennet Farm—Sachet Farm. At about 6 p.m. patrols went forward on to the Merville-Vierhouck road. The relief by the Suffolks took place on the same night without a hitch, our companies taking over the old British front line about night. A quiet day was spent here on the 20th, but next day "D" Company was ordered forward to be at

the disposal of Officer Commanding 11th Suffolks, who was the 183rd Brigade Advance Guard Commander. Later in the day the 9th Battalion was ordered forward to take over half the frontage of the Suffolks, and were in position by 2 a.m. on the 22nd.

Six hours later the battalion was ordered forward, but met with considerable opposition from near Meurillon, "C" Company suffering many casualties. The next day active patrolling was carried out, the enemy being discovered hastily erecting wire entanglements. At night on the 23rd Battalion Headquarters moved to a factory in Merville.

During this day there was heavy gas shelling, continuing on the 24th. Early in the morning a 5·9 inch shell entered the cellars where the Commanding Officer and the Adjutant were, but failed to explode. The "dud" finished up on the bed on which the Adjutant (Captain H. S. Rowe, M.C.) was sitting, but beyond bruises and scratches neither officer was hurt. It was a marvellous escape. Gas, however, caused several casualties during the day, and the Adjutant, the Intelligence Officer (Second-Lieutenant R. Woods), the Lewis-gun Officer (Lieutenant J. H. Howson) and about fifteen men were evacuated. Captain A. V. Freshwater took over the duties of Adjutant. On account of the gas in the factory, Battalion Headquarters moved out on to the banks of the Bourre River behind the factory.

The next day passed quietly and the battalion was relieved at night by the 2nd/4th Royal Berks, the companies moving back to the old front line and its vicinity (Casa Doss). During the 26th the Divisional Commander, Major-General F. L. Duncan, C.M.G., D.S.O., visited the battalion and expressed his appreciation of the good work done. Five days were spent in general salvage work, clearing up the area, and on the 31st August the battalion moved up in support, and, under the orders from the 184th Brigade, "A" Company and two platoons of "C" Company were on the line Carecross-Robermetz by 4 p.m.

Relief, after eighteen days in the front line and support, came on 1st September, the 2nd/6th Royal Warwicks coming in about 6.30 p.m. Companies marched back to Meredith Station, and entrained here for Crowe, whence a few minutes march brought them to Speziano Camp. Light railways, even if they did appear to meander aimlessly, were great aids to marching! But the Army could not do without route-marches, for, after a day spent in clearing up, the battalion did a practice route-march! To the imaginative it will afford some amusement to think out the value of this particular march from the points of view of (a) Brigadier,

(b) Colonel, (c) Company Commander, (d) Subaltern (e) the "P.B.I."

Training continued next day, and on the 5th the battalion marched to Crowe Station, and detrained at Gurnards Cross. A small tactical scheme was carried out during the march to the ruins of Neuf-Berquin; Battalion Headquarters were at Robermetz. In the official diary no mention is made of the weather, but a significant entry for the next day, 6th September, is, "Fine morning and dried our things." Time for this must have been short, for at 11 a.m. the battalion marched forward to bivouacs, Headquarters moving to Neuf-Berquin. Next night the troops went into support of 183rd Brigade. This tour was fairly quiet, except for gas-shells, two casualties being reported.

The 2nd/4th Royal Berks relieved the 9th at night, 11th September, and the battalion took over bivouacs near Yam Farm, being in Brigade reserve. Little of interest took place, tactical schemes forming the chief source of worry. The General Officer Commanding Division inspected the battalion on the 17th and expressed himself well pleased with the smart turn-out. "The shiners" really and truly did shine. As a variation from schemes, companies held a route-march next day, and there was a battalion march on the 19th.

On other fronts events of great magnitude had developed. The "Advance to Victory" began on the 8th August, General Rawlinson's Fourth Army attacking in great style. The Third Army, under General Byng, joined in, and by 9th September the line was about five miles to the west of St. Quentin and about a similar distance west of Cambrai. Our old spot, Monchy-le-Preux, had again passed into British possession on the 26th August. These decisive blows sapped the enemy resistance, and made heavy calls on his reserves; and the details of the 9th Battalion front already enumerated were only a part of the general advance on the Lys front. The enemy had to shorten his line, and by the 6th September there was no Lys Salient. Kemmel Hill was in British hands, and the general line ran Givenchy, Neuve Chapelle, Nieppe, Ploegsteert, Voormezeele.

Plans were developing in the south for the breaking of the Hindenburg Line, before Cambrai and St. Quentin, when the 9th Battalion moved into the front line on the 20th September, relieving the 2nd/7th Royal Warwicks. Battalion Headquarters were on the Sailly-Bac St. Maur road, and the relief was carried out without loss. There was intermittent shelling on the front line, and whilst visiting "B" Company's front line posts, the Commanding

Officer, Lieutenant-Colonel A. Ebsworth, M.C., was wounded and died soon afterwards. Later in the day Lieutenant-Colonel W. Coote-Brown, D.S.O., arrived and took over command of the battalion.

Succeeding days were quiet, our aeroplanes keeping strict watch on the enemy's movements. Farther north, General Plumer's Second Army was ready to attack, and the Hun was given no breathing space. Our section of the line, though not directly concerned in these vast operations south and north of us, was one of incessant watchfulness and pushfulness. The 1st East Lancs on our left flank attacked the enemy on the 25th September and captured Barlette Farm, but were driven out at 6 a.m. next day by a strong counter-attack. During this scrap two Portuguese prisoners-of-war entered our lines.

Relief was expected on the 27th, but this was cancelled. Next day, however, amidst rather more artillery activity, we were relieved by 2nd/8th Worcesters and 2nd/7th Royal Warwicks, after a tour of eight days in the front line. We took over the bivouacs at Yam Farm, and spent the remainder of the month in a general clean up. The next move was on the 2nd October, a route-march via Robermetz, Merville and Steenbecque to Les Ciseaux. Dinner was enjoyed *en route*, and the battalion arrived in billets about 5 p.m..

Four days were spent here, special attention being paid to training in open warfare. This programme was varied by games, and the arrangements were generally left to the Company Commanders. Orders arrived on the 5th October for a move by train, and next morning about 6 o'clock the battalion arrived at Steenbecque Station, had breakfast, and entrained at 9 o'clock. Ten hours later the "40 hommes ou 8 chevaux" pulled into Doullens Station—a trip of about forty miles as the crow should fly! It wasn't the "Flying Scotsman."

The trip via St. Pol and the outskirts of Arras gave us an opportunity of noticing the damage done to the village near Arras. It was the usual picture of ruin—smashed houses and shell-torn terrain. After leaving the train the battalion marched to billets at Pommera, seven kilometres east of Doullens, arriving there about 10 p.m. Most of the troops settled safely in, but not so the Headquarters. Their billet was locked, and the Intelligence Officer spent some time in finding the people with the keys. Tired of waiting, the Commanding Officer found a broken pane, slipped his hand through the aperture, undid the catch, got into the house and opened a door. Just as he did so, the caretaker and his

wife arrived. She broke out into such eloquence that the officers couldn't follow her main thesis: but she was angry. The Brigade Interpreter was sent for, and he dammed the stream of words. (It had been otherwise damned before his arrival!) Anyhow the billet was bare, but no one lost any time in getting down to sleep.

Major E. L. Thomson, D.S.O. (York and Lancaster Regiment) had joined the train at St. Pol, having been appointed Second-in-Command to Lieutenant-Colonel Coote-Brown, Major D. R. Osborne being transferred. Another change had recently taken place, Brigadier-General B. L. Anley, C.M.G., D.S.O., now commanding the 183rd Brigade, a very young officer for such an important post. Two days were spent in Pommera, the afternoon of the 8th October being spent in an attack in conjunction with "tanks," ably represented by limber-wagons! The next day saw a further move by rail from Mondicourt Station to near Havrincourt, thence by march to bivouacs south of Moeuvres.

Madame at the Headquarters Château complained that a cellar had been broken into and twenty bottles of cider taken. A twenty franc note silenced her protest; and Madame was left to work the same trick on other units!

This railway journey was a zig-zag course; the way was through Arras and Achiet-le-Grand, and the *débris* of war lay thick. Broken trenches, contorted heaps of barbed wire, derelict tanks, crashed planes, and German guns in the hopeless medley that defies description and indicts civilization. The shell of the beautiful Cathedral at Arras loomed spectre-like over the chaos of destruction. Where thousands of brave souls had passed to the Last Roll-call, thousands more were clearing up the wreckage, human and material. "They died that we might live."

At Achiet-le-Grand twisted girders and rails were being straightened into bridges and lines. Bapaume, that gory goal of 1916, that storm centre of 1918, had changed but little; it could not have been made worse: we still recall it as a writh of a town. At Havrincourt, the R.T.O. informed us that Cambrai had fallen; and here, where but a few months previously to show oneself in daylight was "to ask for it"—and get it!—was a veritable hive of industry. Camps dotted about, troops swarming everywhere, lorries "knocking" under their heavy loads, and everybody full of the spirit of victory. It was a wonderful journey.

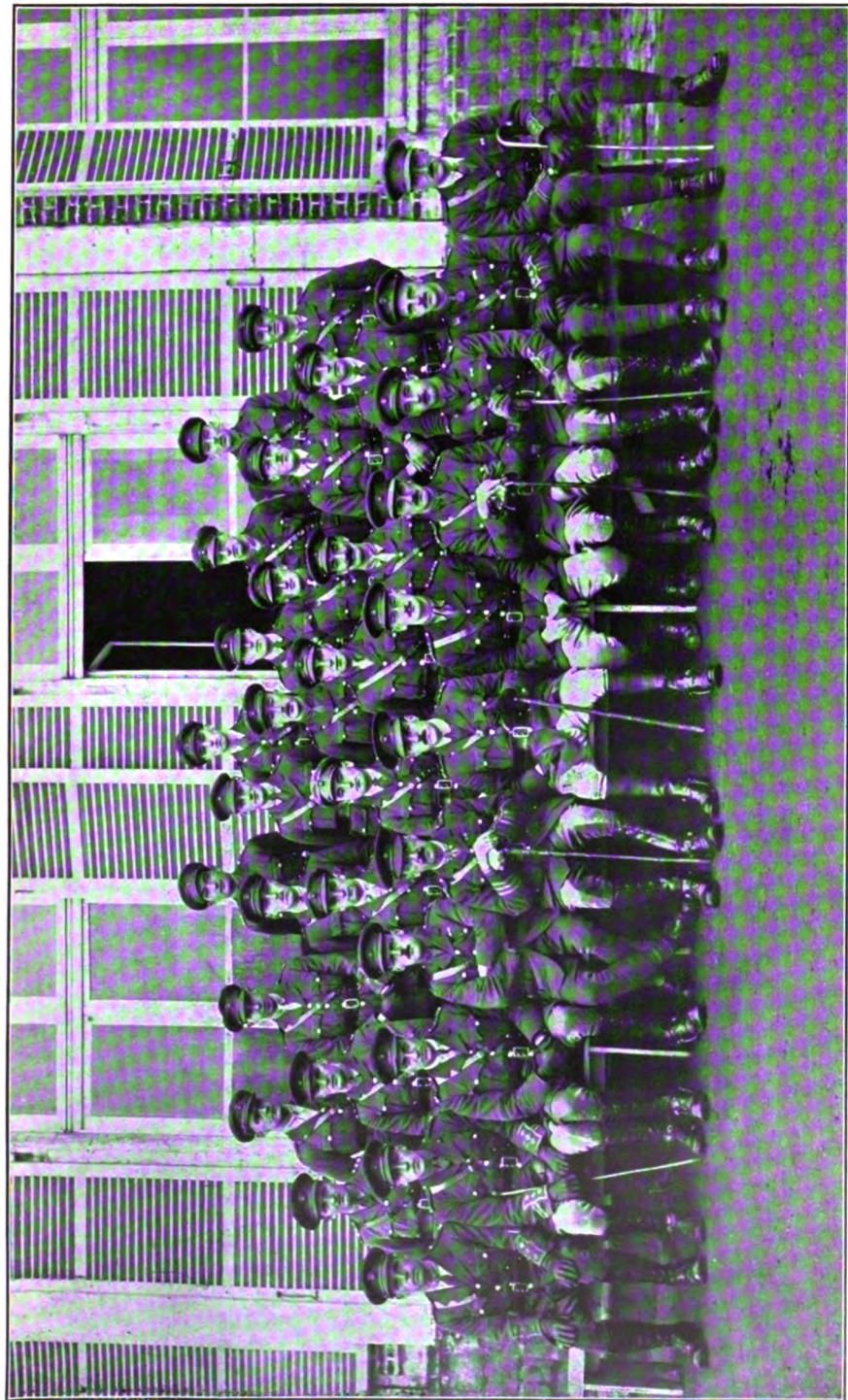
CHAPTER XVII

THE FINAL ATTACK : OCTOBER 1918—NOVEMBER 1918

THIS move via Havrincourt should have appeared in the nature of a miracle to the troops, and to the “ veterans ” of the battalion it was so. The fierce fighting of March, the overwhelming grey hordes, were, and are, still poignant memories. Yet here, in October, the all-powerful German Army was already pushed beyond his much-vaunted Hindenburg Line, and the enemy was in a state of rout. In the north, on the 28th September, General Plumer’s Second Army had scored a brilliant success, and wiped out the Ypres Salient; in the south, after two days of merciless, continuous bombardment, General Rawlinson’s Fourth Army attacked, on the 29th, a twelve-mile front from Holnon to Vendhuille and smashed through the deep Hindenburg defences. There was no respite for the enemy, for General Byng’s Army struck at Cambrai: it was an overwhelming defeat for the enemy.

During the period 8th—12th October, the Second Battle of Le Cateau raged; and the German infantry showed every sign of disorganization. With the tide of victory fully in our favour, the 9th Battalion moved (on the 11th October) to bivouacs near Cantaing. It was a miracle: for railway lines seemed to grow as the victorious troops passed on into territory that had for four years been in German possession. Cantaing is south of the famous Bourlon Wood that had seen such stern fighting a year earlier. It was only a short march, but the halts were many, due to congestion, and there was much doubt as to the exact location of the allotted camp. Across in the enemy lines dull red glows and columns of billowing smoke spoke all too eloquently of the preparations for retreat. Dumps were being burnt, or blown up feverishly.

The next day was spent in training for open warfare; in salvage; and in games. Officers’ kits were examined, and found, like some jockeys, to be overweight. The surplus had to go; but it was really remarkable how kits did grow in size; they all did; it was a habit of the brutes, and junior officers never could understand the authority that pruned them periodically. So passed the results



OFFICERS AFTER THE ARMISTICE.

[Facing p. 112.]

of months of scrounging and souveniring. It was but small compensation always to discover that the greatest offenders were on Battalion Headquarters.

Divine Service was held on Sunday, 13th October, fifes and drums helping out the singing. After the parade the Brigadier inspected the men and was very satisfied with the turn-out. The afternoon was spent by the officers reconnoitring the area between Noyelles and Flesquières, where, on the morrow, a tactical scheme of training was to be carried out. Flesquières had been the scene of fierce fighting by the 3rd Division a few days earlier, and the ground was littered with dead Germans and dead horses. The gruesome scene was not improved by the stench; but the ardent souvenir hunters were busy during the course of the training, and just after the kits had been cut down too! War had its compensations.

Great as the organization was, there were still shortages in some supplies. One diarist complains bitterly of the lack of whisky. He had not long returned from England, where the cry was that the stuff was being sent out to the Army. But our friend could not trace the missing fluid. After much cogitation he adds the heart-rending note: "The real cause is that the very thirsty Yankees . . . drink so much of our whisky that it has to be rationed, and we have to go very short. Why the Hanover cannot these people live up to their principles?"

Certainly this shortage did not much affect the troops, for they were elated at the constant succession of items of good news. The Belgians had taken Roulers; the French could scarcely keep pace with the retreating enemy; the British were hurrying forward, and vast numbers of prisoners and guns were being captured. It was "tails up" right throughout the Allied Armies.

Training programmes continued until the 18th October, when the battalion moved forward via Noyelles to the southern outskirts of Cambrai, a daylight march terminating at noon. The Intelligence Officer, Lieutenant Woods, had gone ahead and reported the billets to be quite good, but likely to be cramped, as the 24th Division, on its way from the line, was also stopping there.

"The centre of the town was a terrible scene of ruin and desolation; troops engaged in clearing the streets. The Hôtel de Ville in the Place d'Armes must have been a fine building, but now, except for the front façade, which was fairly intact, had been gutted by fire and smashed by shell-fire: all around a heap of rubbish. . . . We saw some of the Court Rooms with remnants of finely carved chairs and seats, desks, etc., sticking out of the mass

of fallen masonry. . . . No civilians about. On returning through the inner circle we went into a couple of the less badly knocked about houses and found they had been left after very short notice, as most of the household things were left, but there were evident signs of looting."

The stay at Cambrai was short, for next evening in a slight drizzle the battalion set off across the maze of railways south-east of the town, along the Le Cateau road, thence north through Cauroir, passing south of Cagnoncles to Avesnes-lez-Aubert, arriving there about 10.30 p.m. Billets were better than those we had just left. This was the battle zone, for the guns were blazing away merrily all around, and there was a rumour of a big stunt on the immediate front on the morrow.

This attack did take place, at 2 a.m. on the 20th, our old friends of the 17th Division participating in a desperately resisted attack about Le Cateau. A lull in the advance had occurred until our communications were strengthened, and the new phase of the battle was just opening. There was a curious interlude at Headquarters, for the owners of the billet arrived, and told their story. Early that morning they had been in the village of Haussy in German hands: at 2 a.m. the British shells swept the place, the British troops arrived and passed on, leaving these people free to return to their home. They were volatile, their admiration for "les Anglais" was unbounded; and their delight on seeing the map marked with the stages of advance was extreme. Their luck at escaping the consequences of the barrage did not seem to worry them. To allow them to settle down, Headquarters moved to another house across the street. Streams of refugees passed through the village, carrying bundles, wheeling barrows and perambulators. Many carried babies, and all were wretchedly bedraggled with mud and rain.

During the afternoon of the 22nd the Corps Commander, Lieutenant-General Sir C. Ferguson, paid a social visit, and made light of the prospective operations. Spirits were high, and the Corps Commander was decidedly gleeful. Next morning the battalion moved forward to St. Aubert, pending operations to be carried out during the night 23rd/24th. At night, just about 8 o'clock, the next move was made, relieving the 8th Gloucesters (19th Division) almost at midnight. Roads were still congested, and it was with the utmost difficulty that the battalion got through the packed streets of Haussy. Fritz was nicely off the mark with his 5.9 shells, and caused no casualties. The troops then deployed, but suffered some losses on their way to the battle

line. Battalion Headquarters were in a house on the main road running parallel to the Harpies River, and the troops were to attack and capture the villages of St. Martin and Bermerain, the final objective being the high ground 1,500 yards north-east of Bermerain.

Zero hour was at 4 a.m., and the contrast with German methods was obvious. During the enemy advance in the spring he did practically no attacking in force at night. The British adopted a twenty-four hour day, attacking at the most useful times. The preliminary bombardment was intense, but did not reach "drum-fire"; at zero plus 6, the troops moved forward, and their attack was a complete success. The 9th Battalion was on the right, 11th Suffolks on the left, joining up with the 4th Division, and our men swept forward, took the villages, captured 6 officers, 150 men, 4 trench mortars and 43 machine-guns. It was a neatly executed movement, and involved the crossing of the River Ecaillon; the 9th had to withdraw slightly from their final objective, as the left battalion had met with considerable opposition in the village of Vendegies. The 1st East Lancs came up and supported the two battalions in line. At 3 p.m. the enemy counter-attacked, but was repulsed. Late at night the 9th was withdrawn into reserve.

The 9th Battalion attacked on a 1,200 yards frontage, but in depth, "B" and "C" Companies in front, "D" and "A" Companies in rear. Each company had two platoons in front, supported by the other two. Thus only about sixty-five or seventy men were in front over the whole 1,200 yards, thus presenting small target for the enemy. In this "square" formation the battalion pushed rapidly down the slope right through St. Martin. The advance companies took no notice of enemy stragglers in the village, leaving them to the "moppers-up" who were following.

Dawn was just breaking when the leading troops reached the far side of St. Martin and reorganized. The River Ecaillon was spanned by only one stone bridge, but the troops had waded over before the enemy had time to make a stand. Bermerain lay on the near slope of a hill, and the 9th, sweeping across the fields, entered the village, but met with strong opposition. Their methods of attack were, however, too clever, and the enemy scattered, only to be dealt with by the succeeding waves. After severe hand-to-hand fighting, the survivors surrendered. One man was known to have accounted for over a dozen of the enemy ere he fell fatally wounded by a bullet fired from the end of the street.

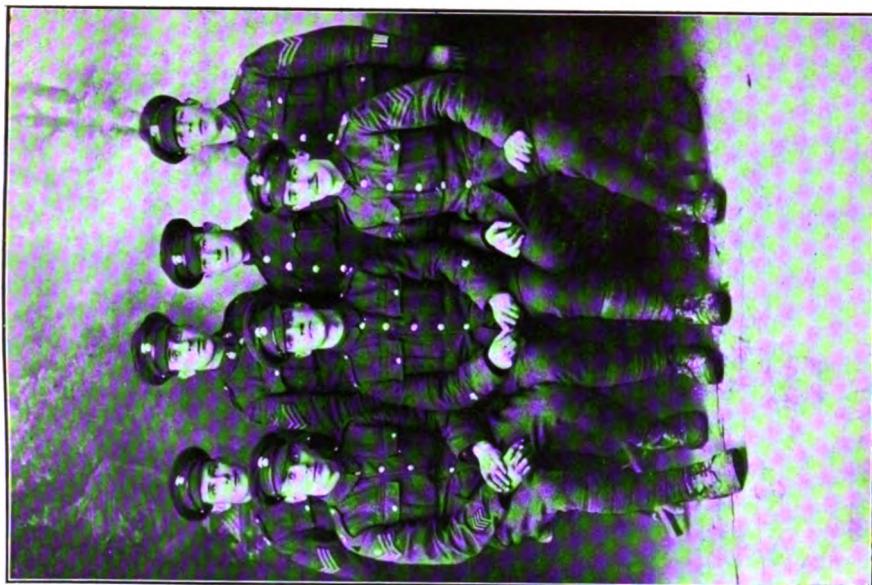
The forward sections reached their objective during the forenoon, both villages being cleared of enemy troops. While con-

solidating, it was found that the battalion (11th Suffolks) on the left had met with considerable resistance in Vendegies, and had not reached their objective. This left our left flank in the air, so a skeleton flank-guard was formed by a series of Lewis-gun posts north-west of St. Martin and north-west and west of Bermerain.

Such is the outline of a fine attack, where the utmost heroism was shown by all ranks. The way the men went for the Boche machine-gun posts was wonderful. They skirmished up to them as near as possible, then by mutual co-operation between Lewis gunners, rifle grenadiers, and bombers, the riflemen dashed in with the deadly bayonet. All round, the work of officers and men was beyond praise; but an impartial historian must give prominence to the work of Major I. C. G. Brady. He was wonderful; his daring and *sang-froid* inspired the troops to their clever success: his praises are still sung by his men and by his fellow-officers.

Casualties were heavy, especially amongst the non-commissioned officers; they charged the posts and were marked men for their efficient leadership. Captain V. H. Thornton, commanding "A" Company, was killed; also Second-Lieutenant H. C. Foreman of "D" Company; the wounded were: Second-Lieutenant J. Pearson, commanding "B" Company; Second-Lieutenants H. A. Quinn, C. G. Oliver, and A. D. Haslam; Lieutenant W. J. Hewson, the Transport Officer, was wounded while bringing up the rations. Stretcher cases were very numerous; the Dressing Station was at Battalion Headquarters, in charge of the Medical Officer, a little Irish doctor, Captain O'Connor. He was hard at work, and an eye-witness there sums up the stream of wounded thus: "The sight of the stretcher cases on the road affected me very much; in the bright sunshine with everything looking so cheerful in nature, it was truly a case of 'while every prospect pleases, and only man is vile,' to hear the groans and the occasional shout of someone in agony and to look down and contemplate these wrecked and bleeding men, some with huge pieces of their bodies torn off, bones laid bare, men vomiting from internal wounds, others sobbing out their last breaths. God! and this is our much vaunted civilization. It wrung my heart when I saw one of our runners, recognizing a bad case, lean over him and very gently say, 'Jack, don't you know me?' and touch his face as lovingly as a mother would her child. How the men feel for each other and how they realize what each other has gone through."

The battalion rested in the cellars of St. Martin during the morning of the 25th, Battalion Headquarters having moved there



SERGEANTS OF "B" COMPANY AFTER ARMISTICE.
[Facing p. 116.]



OFFICERS OF
"B" COMPANY
9th MORNINGSTAR AND
FUSILIERS
New Year Day
Farewell.

also, but at 2 p.m. the troops marched to support of the 184th Brigade. The support line was on the ridge captured by the 9th on the previous day, the attack having gone on overnight: Headquarters were established at La Folie. A quiet morning was spent on the 26th, but towards mid-day the enemy shelled Battalion Headquarters, and kept this up for about four hours. For a while the house was vacated, and position taken up in a sunken road near by. A message was received from Brigade saying that Major E. L. Thomson was to take over command of the battalion in order to give the Commanding Officer, Lieutenant-Colonel W. Coote-Brown, D.S.O., a much needed rest. At the same time orders were to hand for the 183rd Brigade to relieve the 184th Brigade as Advance Guard Brigade, the 9th Battalion to be in Brigade Reserve. The Suffolks and East Lancs were to attack over the bridge-heads towards Maresches.

During the early morning of the 27th October Headquarters "A" and "D" Companies moved forward to Sepmeries, "B" and "C" Companies remaining in their old positions. Advanced Headquarters was a Château, shared with the Suffolks, and it received a good deal of attention from the enemy. The attack by the Suffolks and East Lancs was not successful, and the 9th, not being required, returned to their old billets at La Folie, arriving there about 6 o'clock. Enemy shelling was heavy, but the battalion escaped casualties.

At night next day, the 28th October, the 9th Battalion again went forward and relieved the 11th Suffolks in the Sepmeries Sector, "A," "B" and "C" Companies in front line, with "D" Company (Major Brady) in support in a sunken road. The relief was completed by 9.15 p.m., and patrols were at once sent out. The front was largely a series of shell holes: at other places, mere depressions had been scooped in the ground to afford some slight measure of protection. Patrols scoured the ground carefully, and reported that no enemy was on the west of the River Rhônelle in front of Maresches. Our position looked down on this village, but the enemy had sited his guns on the reverse side of the opposite slope, east of the village. From this place he made things uncomfortable, playing heavily on the railway line west of Sepmeries.

The forward area was treated lightly, but the back areas received some extra attention on the 29th October, the Boche being sure after about 6 a.m. that no attack was to take place that day, as he had liberally drenched the area in gas. Next night, however, strong officer patrols were to push forward over the bridge and

capture Maresches. These dashed forward, but the enemy sprang a surprise. In addition to covering the approaches with machine-gun posts, he had prepared a thatched cottage for ignition. This huge torch illuminated the scene and showed clearly the troops dashing forward. Furious machine-gun fire met them, and stopped their advance. In view of the intensity of the firing, the casualties were very slight, one killed and two wounded. The idea of "stealing" this village was unfortunately not successful.

The main British attack, however, was due on the 1st November; Valenciennes was one objective to the north, and, as soon as this had been captured, the Fourth, Third and First Armies were to strike on a thirty mile front from the Sambre River to Valenciennes, with the Mormal Forest in the centre, still a formidable obstacle. The nibblings of the 61st Division around Maresches were preliminary to the "pinching-out" of Valenciennes. Hence the last day of October was fairly quiet, the day being marred by the death of Second-Lieutenant O. E. Bowman, (acting Officer Commanding "B" Company) killed by an enemy shell.

Orders had been issued to the companies as follows: "A" Company was to advance to the sunken road a few hundred yards to its front; "B" Company was to swing round to the right and support "A"; "C" Company to cross the Rhônelle River, carrying up and placing its own temporary bridges, and mop up the southern part of the village of Maresches as far as the main road running east and west through it. Zero hour was at 5.15 a.m. 1st November. The news of the surrender of Austria and Turkey heartened the already high-spirited troops. The end was in sight!

The enemy was nervous, and opened his own barrage at about 3 a.m., appearing as though about to attack. Our guns replied, and the artillery duel was colossal. In this inferno the 9th Battalion swept on to their objective, the high ground east of the village, and gained it gallantly, moving like clockwork. "C" Company went down the hill with their ladder bridges, spanned the Rhônelle in four places, crossed over, and proceeded to mop up the village according to orders. An enemy counter-attack at about 11.15 a.m. forced back the Worcesters on our left slightly, but our "C" Company moved forward and closed the gap. The enemy employed four tanks in this assault, two of them being put out of action by our 18-pounders. A battery galloped into action on the outskirts of Maresches and got two direct hits on one tank. This was an effective rounding off to a magnificent episode, for the 9th Battalion was the only unit of the Division that worked forward to time. The very nature of the attack, and its delightful

precision resulted in the casualties being light. Second-Lieutenant Jung was wounded, four men were killed, and about thirty wounded. The action was a credit to every officer and man in the battalion, and well deserved the high praise of the Divisional Commander. Three officers, seventy men and two machine-guns were captured.

At night the battalion was relieved by the 2nd/4th Royal Berks (184th Brigade) and returned to La Folie, staying there overnight. Next afternoon billets at Sommaing were occupied, and on the 3rd November the battalion marched to Avesnes-lez-Aubert, via Montrecourt and St. Aubert. These moves were necessary to make way for fresh troops, our own men being tired: fresh troops were necessary to keep touch with the enemy in his retreat. Congratulatory telegrams arrived at Headquarters on the excellent work put in. On our arrival at Avesnes-lez-Aubert we found Colonel Coote-Brown just off to England, his health not having improved.

Succeeding days were spent in training, but on the 8th November the battalion returned to Bermerain, arriving there about 3 p.m., and continued training. The programme for the 11th was exercises until 10 a.m., then at 10.30 a.m. a battalion scheme was to take place. This was somewhat upset by the Adjutant, Captain Harrison, announcing the cessation of hostilities. The famous wire read:

" 11th November, 1918.—From 17th Corps begins aaa. Hostilities will cease 1100 hours to-day November 11th aaa. Stand fast on line reached at that hour which will be reported by wire to Corps Headquarters aaa. Defensive precautions will be maintained aaa. There will be no intercourse of any description with the enemy aaa Ends. 61st Division 0800 hours."

The men cheered, and Lieutenant-Colonel Thomson spoke to the companies in turn, telling them to keep up their training. The Brigadier arrived and addressed the men in similar terms. Training then proceeded! Such was the reception of the news by a hard-fighting battalion, with all its honours fresh upon it. What a contrast to the wild scenes at home!

CHAPTER XVIII

ARMISTICE: NOVEMBER 1918—NOVEMBER 1919

It really took time for the significance of Armistice to be appreciated. No more shells, no more rifle-fire, no more gas, no more machine-guns, no more "over-the-top," no more — oh! all these things were finished. After more than three years of it, the "old hands" could scarcely realize the position. Immense silence followed the continual inferno of flame and noise. Eyes still shone with the strange light of perplexity, that far-away look of men who went through life expecting each moment to meet death. The everlasting nearness of the borderland, the feeling of its almost inevitability left their mark on the strained features. It is still there for thoughtful people to see—the mark that proclaims a MAN.

There was no time, however, for introspection. The battalion marched to St. Aubert three days after the Armistice, thence, on the 15th, to Cambrai. Following Church Parade next day, the officers of the 9th were defeated at Soccer by the East Lancs officers by 3—2. Routine had its sway, varied by games, concerts and salvage work. On the 23rd the transport left by road for the Bernaville area, followed two days later by the troops who entrained at Cambrai at 9 p.m. for Conteville, arriving there about 4 p.m. next day—another express trip! Battalion Headquarters and "D" Company were in billets at Longvillers, "A" and "B" Companies at Domleger, "C" Company, transport and Quarter-masters' Stores at Egenville.

On the 8th December the battalion marched to Vauchelles, near Abbeville: but, as this village was too small to hold all the troops, "A" and "C" Companies were in billets in Neuf Moulin, some miles away. Evidently, true to tradition, "B" Company had to remain close by under supervision! Huts were obtained, however, and the outside companies were also brought near to Headquarters. Educational schemes were instituted to fit the men for their return to civil life, and the time was well spent.

Little of note took place—reference to the Christmas and New

Year festivities is lacking!—until the 10th January, 1919, when Major-General Duncan, attended by Brigadier-General Anley, presented the King's Colour. It was a magnificent parade, and at its conclusion Colonel Thomson called for three cheers for the General. The Staffs were then entertained to lunch.

Next day demobilization began—miners first. This caused another outbreak of the disease peculiar to the Army—that known as “sweating.” Formerly it was done “on leave”; now the men were “sweating on demobilization.” Probably they would have sweated harder had they been forced to cope with the “Demob. Regulations”! Despite the batches of men leaving, the battalion continued to shine in the various competitions. No. 9 platoon won the Brigadier's Cup in the Brigade Competition; while No. 3 platoon, under Lieutenant Bestford, won the Cup for the best turned out, equipped, and drilled platoon in the Brigade.

In February the battalion moved to the Dieppe area, and was stationed at Martin Eglise, under the administration of the 182nd Brigade (Brigadier-General Evans), being used for demobilization duties. The weather was bad, the huts were in an unfinished state, hundreds of men were constantly on the move, and the camp was called—amongst other names!—“Gumboot Camp.”

Most of the miners had gone back to civilian life, and little remained of the original battalion. Drafts of young soldiers were constantly arriving, with volunteers for the Rhine Army. On the 4th March, 478 other ranks and a squad of officers arrived from the Yorkshire and East Yorks Regiments. By the end of March the battalion was nearly two thousand strong, one thousand being at Martin Eglise, the remainder in groups all over the countryside, guarding dumps and camps, acting as orderlies in hospitals, and in such other jobs as fall to the lot of a soldier. Pity the poor clerks in the Orderly Room!

St. George's Day was made the occasion of a great gathering. It was the last celebration of this day the 9th Battalion was likely to see, and a special programme was drawn up to make it memorable. The band awakened the battalion at *réveillé* by playing popular airs: a special breakfast had been prepared, and then the men paraded for an inspection by the Brigadier. The Colour was decorated with the red and white roses, and each man wore roses in his cap—a gay spectacle. After the inspection the General took the salute, as the battalion marched past in column of companies. After being congratulated on its smartness, the 9th marched off

parade, and the men were dismissed to partake of another special meal.

The officers had a big luncheon party to which everyone of note was invited. During the afternoon sports were held on the parade ground, where marquees had been erected. Tea was at 4 o'clock, after which the finals were contested. Followed a free show in the cinema for all ranks: and it was Guest Night in the Messes afterwards. One need say no more than it was Guest Night. St. George's Day, 1919, was a memorable occasion.

All this while the Educational Courses had been progressing. Practical work in trades was taught by professional men. Lectures were arranged by the battalion as well as by the Brigade and Division, and the utmost done to refit the men physically and mentally for civil life. Military training continued, and after the parades the men were marched to their respective class-rooms. Sports filled most afternoons, and the evenings were not neglected. Concert troupes were called in to give as many shows as possible, the Lena Ashwell Concert Party being amongst the "bag." Whist drives were held weekly, good prizes being provided. Dancing was popular, and once a week the Commanding Officer indented for a couple of lorry-loads of W.A.A.C.'s. These dances were well conducted, and enjoyable functions. The string band was composed of professionals, and was often engaged to play at public dances in Dieppe. Truly it was a full life.

"B" Company maintained its reputation by winning, on the 28th May, the Brigade League Football Cup. Boxing was another popular art, the moving spirit in this being Company Sergeant-Major Stoddart. A further honour awaited the 9th Battalion, for its tug-of-war team was selected to represent the British Army in France and Flanders at the Olympia Tournament. The team did not win there, but the honour was in no way tarnished.

In August the break-up of the Brigade began, for the first men who had enlisted under the Derby Scheme were sent off for demobilization. Early in September Brigadier-General Evans left for England, and it was only a matter of time ere the 9th Battalion would cease to exist. On the 26th September the advance party of the "relief" arrived—the 40th Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers (Labour Battalion). Changes were continuous, and matters were in a state of flux.

During October orders were received for general demobilization, the battalion to be reduced to Equipment Guard by the 1st November. The Sergeants celebrated this by having a farewell dinner at the Chariot d'Or in Dieppe. Mobilization equipment was

handed in on the 29th October, and the officers celebrated that deed by giving their farewell dinner on the 30th. Verily it was a "breaking-up" party!

The transport was handed in on the 31st—why should the transport have been held back until after the dinner?—and the 40th Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers came into camp to take over. Next day, the Colour, with Lieutenant Hutton in charge, left for Newcastle. Only a few officers remained, and these messed with the 40th Battalion until the 6th November, after which the Commanding Officer alone remained. His Clearance Certificate was signed on the 21st, and next day he left Dieppe.

The 9th (Northumberland Hussars) Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers had ceased to be. In its five years of life it had lived up to the prestige of its regiment; it had fought and suffered, defended and attacked; and it had left its name clearly written on the glorious Scroll of the Great War. Its spirit is alive.

EMBARKATION ROLL

“B” COMPANY

No.	NAME.	RANK.	REMARKS.
12225	Aggie, R. A.		Trans. T.M.B.
12152	Ainsley, F.		Trans. T.M.B.
12216	Alder, N.		2nd-Lieut. Tank C.
12293	Alderson, C. P.	C.S.M.	Lieut. 15th West Yorks.
c.b.s.	Alexander, G.		A/Capt. 9th D.L.I.
c.b.s.	Allan, R. J.		Lieut. 9th D.L.I.
12261	Allan, W. D.	C.Q.M.S.	Lieut. R.A.F.
12197	Anderson, W.		Trans. 10th N.F.
c.b.s.	Anthony, M. S.		Capt. 19th N.F., att. R.A.F.
c.b.s.	Arkle, N. A.		2nd-Lieut. T.S.
12268	Atkinson, F. P.		Killed 7/7/16.
c.b.s.	Aubin, J. F. G.		Capt. 6th D.L.I.; D.S.O., M.C. and Bar; killed 9/4/18.
12326	Badsey, B.		Killed 9/11/16.
12347	Bailes, A.	C.Q.M.S.	
12186	Barber, H. V.		Killed 7/6/16.
11895	Barnes, J. T.		Killed 6/9/15.
13130	Barron, B.		Killed 7/7/16.
12234	Baston, G. T.		Trans. West Riding Regiment.
	Bates, T.		Discharged with pension.
12153	Batey, W. B.		Lt. R.A.F.; M.C.
12119	Baty, R.		17th Div. Salvage Co.
12223	Bell, R. A.		Killed 7/7/16.
12147	Blackie, W. W.		Died of wounds 12/7/16.
12314	Blair, J. E.		2nd-Lieut. R.A.F.
10414	Bolam, J. H.		

No.	Name.	Rank.	Remarks.
12246	Bolam, W.		2nd-Lt. 16th N.F., att. R.A.F.; M.C., Croix de Guerre.
c.b.s.	Bonnyman, J. A.		Capt. 4th Welsh R. D.C.M.
12250	Bowell, G.	C.S.M.	
12317	Brown, C.		2nd-Lt. Border R.
12279	Brown, D.		Died of wounds 8/7/16.
12273	Brown, G. C.		Sgt., trans. Indian S. and T. Corps.
12176	Brown, Joseph		2nd-Lt. Yorks. and Lancs. Regt.
12111	Brown, S.	2nd-Lt. "B" Co.	
12280	Brown, T. W.		2nd-Lt. Border R.
12174	Buchan, G. A.	Sergeant	Sergt. Gas Section, R.E.; D.C.M.
12304	Burnett, G. R.		Lieut. 11th D.L.I.
12343	Burrows, S.		C.Q.M.S. 5th N.F.
12222	Burstall, B.		Trans. 13th D.L.I.
c.b.s.	Cameron, E.		Capt. 19th D.L.I.
14808	Cannell, W. E.		
12168	Catnach, T. B.		Lieut. 26th N.F.; k. in action 19/4/17.
6469	Chandler, H.		
12193	Chapman, J. W.		Lieut. 22nd N.F.
12205	Charlton, H. F.		2nd-Lt. Labour C.
12287	Child, S. R.		2nd-Lieut. Yorks & Lancs. Regt.
c.b.s.	Clapham, H.	Sergeant	Captain, A.S.C.
12212	Clark, J.	Corpl.	2nd-Lieut. N.F.
12159	Clough, W. H.		G.S.I.; Meritorious Service Medal.
12252	Cook, C. L. H.		
12181	Cook, W. L.		
12227	Cowling, H.		2nd-Lieut. R.A.F.
12171	Craig, G. E.		
9884	Cram, J.	Corpl.	Killed 6/7/16.
12248	Crofton, A.		

No.	Name.	Rank.	Remarks.
12113	Cross, J. H.		Captain R.A.F.
12243	Crowley, C. E.		Lieutenant R.A.F.; mentioned in despatches.
12320	Crute, N. R.	L/Sergt.	Sergt., Intelligence Staff.
12241 c.b.s.	Cutter, P. Daggett, C. H.	Corpl.	Capt. 23rd N.F.; M.C.; killed 11/2/17.
12080	Darling, A. H.	Sergeant	2nd-Lt. 8th Yorkshire Regt.; killed 10/7/16.
12139	Davidson, T. E.	"	Killed 9/11/16.
12264	Dixon, N. H.		Lt. Yorks. & Lancs. Regt.
12328	Dixon, R. H.		Killed 4/10/15.
12300	Dobson, W. A.		2nd-Lt. 136th S. Batt., R.G.A.
12215 11604	Dodd, T. Dodd, W.	Corpl.	Cadet, R.A.F. Capt. 12th D.L.I.; M.C.
	Dodds, R.		Trans. 9th W. R. Regt.
12179 c.b.s.	Dodds, T. Dodsworth, P. C.	Sergeant	Lieut. 10th S.L.I. Major 18th N.F.; M.C.
c.b.s.	Donaldson, E.	"	Lt. R.N.; mentioned in despatches, Gallipoli and Salonica.
12164	Donaldson, R.	Sergeant	C.S.M. 2nd N.F.
12258	Douglass, E. W.		Killed 7/7/16.
12329	Dunn, R. O.		
12247	Easten, G. T.		Killed 7/7/16.
12143	Edgar, J. J.	L/Sergt.	Flight Sgt. R.A.F.
12126	Ellender, S. G.	L/Cpl.	Corpl. 4th N.F.
12157	English, J.		Lieut. R.G.A.
9124	Evans, J. Fairbairn, E. J.	Sergeant	Cpl. 9th West Riding Regt.

No.	NAME.	RANK.	REMARKS.
12254	Fairlam, J. T.		Died of wounds.
12102	Fenwick, F.		Lt. R.A.F.; killed flying at Newcastle 24/3/19.
12327	Ferguson, C.		Lieut. 51st N.F.
12226	Forster, R. W.		
12144	Fraser, O.		L/Cpl. 8th Yorks. & Lancs. Rgt.; M.M. with Bar; missing.
12169	Garbutt, R. H.		Lieut. 11th N.F.
12298	Gardner, C.		C.Q.M.S. 11th D.L.I.
12231	Gardner, H.		Transport.
12310	Gateshill, H. V.		2nd-Lt. 12th N.F.
12235	Gibbins, J. T.		Killed 23/4/17.
12195	Gibson, H. M.		
12297	Glen, A.		Engineer Lieut. R.N.R.
12148	Goldthorp, S.		Killed 7/7/16.
12255	Gowland, G. E.		
12346	Graham, G. H.		Lieut.; mentioned in despatches.
6662	Graham, J. S.		Cpl. K.O.Y.L.I.
12177	Grant, R. K.	L/Cpl.	R.A.O.C. Italian Ex. Force.
12178	Grant, W. C.	Corpl.	Pilot Sgt. R.A.F.
12123	Gray, T. J.	Captain	Captain R.A.F.
12161	Gregory, J. V.		Captain 4th N.F.; M.C. 1917 and Bar 1918.
12142	Haig, F. C.		Trans. 8th N.F.; killed 16/8/17.
12158	Hall, J.	Corpl.	
12150	Hall, N.	Sergeant	Lieut. R.E.; M.C.
	Hall, P.		Lieut. M.G. Corps.
12109	Hall, Sid.		Sgt. A.S.C.; Meritorious S. Medal.
12110	Hall, Stan.		2nd-Lt. 53rd N.F.
c.b.s.	Halliday, W. H.		2nd-Lt. 13th N.F.; killed Dardanelles.

No.	Name.	Rank.	Remarks.
12145	Hamilton, S. B.		
12285	Hardcastle, F.	Sergeant	C.Q.M.S. 52nd D.L.I.
16455	Hardisty, M.		
12196	Hardy, C. E.		Major 22nd N.F., mentioned in despatches; killed 13/4/18.
13220	Hardy, F.		2nd-Lt. 22nd N.F.; killed 9/9/17.
12961	Harper, D.	L/Cpl.	Trans. 17th Div. Sig. Coy.
12266	Harrison, A.		Trans. to "C" Co.; killed 30/8/15.
12348	Harrison, N.		
12988	Hastings, J.		
12239	Headlam, J.		
12251	Henderson, E. A.	Sergeant	2nd-Lt. 8th Cyclists' Corps.
12307	Henderson, J.		Att. 17th Div. H.Q.
12135	Henderson, N. P.		2nd-Lieut. D.L.I.
12229	Hetherington, J.		2nd-Lt. 7th N.F.
12127	Hillary, A.	Lieut. "B" Co.	
12167	Hopper, J. A.		Lieut. 26th N.F.; M.C.; k. 13/4/17.
12319	Hudson, J. C.		Trans. Gas Section, R.E.
14798	Hudson, R.		Capt. Tank Corps.
12323	Humble, T.		Lieut. R.A.F.
12173	Hunter, A. L.	Corpl.	2nd-Lt. 9th R.F.; killed.
c.b.s.	Hunter, G. D. L.		Lieut. R.E.
12210	Hutchinson, E.		Died of wounds 2/5/17.
12324	Hutchinson, H. M.		2nd-Lieut. N.F.; killed 29/11/17.
	Illingworth, B.		Discharged at Canford.

No.	Name.	Rank.	Remarks.
12249	Ismay, R. N.		
12192	Jarah, C.		2nd-Lieut. 22nd D.L.I.; killed 20/6/17.
12217	Jeune, G. W.		Trans. 17th D.H.Q.
10769	Johnson, A.		Cpl. 3rd N.F.
12281	Johnstone, S. M. G.	C.Q.M.S. "C" Co.	
	Kane, R. J.		Discharged at Canford.
12188	Kay, R. M.		Killed 2/10/15.
c.b.s.	Knott, R. C.	C.Q.M.S. "B" Co.	Capt. 19th N.F., att. 20th N.F.; killed 14/8/16.
12207	Laidler, F. C.	Sergeant	Killed 7/7/16.
12332	Lamb, C. F.		Killed 7/7/16.
12331	Lennox, J.		2nd-Lt. 20th D.L.I.
c.b.s.	Levin, C. N.		Captain 21st N.F.; M.C.; killed 21/3/18.
12301	Lish, J. R.	Sergeant	2nd-Lt. Lincoln R.; killed 4/10/17.
12183	Lishman, A.	Corpl.	
12190	Lishman, W. J.	„	
12283	Logie, G. M. L.	Captain "B" Co.	
10134	Long, H.		
12124	Lumsden, J. W.		
c.b.s.	Lunn, N.		Major 27th N.F.; M.C.
12120	Lunn, S. H.	Sergeant	O.R. Staff Sergt.
	Lyall, H.		Discharged at Canford.
12357	Lynes, R.	Sergeant	2nd Lieut. 1st N.F.; mentioned in despatches.
12277	Macleod, D. K.		2nd-Lieut. R.F.A.; killed.
12309	MacGregor, J. A.		Att. A.P.C.

No.	NAME.	RANK.	REMARKS.
18691	Magrine, F.		
1522	Malloy, J.	Armourer Sergeant	
14357	Mann, F. E.		
12115	Mann, L.		Lieut. 25th N.F.
12154	Mason, T.		Transport.
10196	Marshall, W.	Sergeant	2nd-Lt. Leicester R.
12156	Mason, V.	2nd-Lt. "B" Co.	Killed 1/4/18.
12184	McChlery, W.		Trans. 2nd N.F.
12338	McLoughlin, G. O.		Died in hospital.
12114	McQuillen, H. J.	Corpl.	
12240	Melville, M. J.		2nd-Lieut. Border Regt.
12265	Menin, G. D.		
c.b.s.	Middleton, R. W. S.		Lieut. R.A.F.
12238	Milburn, E.		Sgt. 17th D.H.Q.; mentioned in despatches.
	Miller, J.		Trans. to W. Riding Regt.
12356	Milne, C. D.		
12187	Mitchell, J.		
12282	Mitchell, M. F.		Lieut. 14th N.F.
12219	Mitchell, R. W.		2nd-Lt. Border Rgt.
12330	Mitcheson, S.		Trans. Gas S., R.E.
7696	Moffett, T. F.		
12245	Mole, G. L.		Lieut. 8th N.F.
c.b.s.	Moncrieff, A.		Major 177th Field Co., R.E.
10203	Moor, W. R.	L/Cpl.	Killed 7/7/16.
11491	Moore, A.		
12315	Morris, J. S.	Sergeant	In orderly room.
c.b.s.	Muir, H.		2nd-Lt. 11th East Yorks.; accidentally killed 18/4/16.
12260	Muitt, J. H.	Corpl.	
12103	Murphy, F.	Sergeant	Manager, Aircraft Factory.

No.	NAME.	RANK.	REMARKS.
12263	Murray, H.		
12305	Murton, D. O.		
14792	Murton, A. N.	Sergeant	P.O.W.
12155	Muse, T. J.	L/Cpl.	Killed 3/11/15.
12121	Norris, R. H.		Lieut. R.A.F.
c.b.s.	Oliver, J. R.		Lieut. 22nd N.F.
12134	Onyon, J. S.		Trans. 3rd N.F.
12106	Ord, B. P. D.		Killed 2/10/15.
	Payne, A. V.		Trans. "C" Co.
12112	Peebles, J. A.	Sergeant	Killed 8/7/16.
12333	Penney, R.		2nd-Lt. 11th N.F.; killed.
12341	Perkins, H. E.		Cpl. A.S.C.
12116	Petersen, E.		
12122	Petrie, A.		Cpl. Tyneside Scot.
10589	Pike, G.		
12233	Porteous, A. S.		Killed 7/7/16.
	Potts, H.		Left sick in Eng-land; Cpl. 5th N.F.; P.O.W.
12334	Poulton, J. H.	Sergeant	Died of wounds 16/8/16.
12230	Price, W. S.		Died of wounds 7/7/16.
12221	Ray, F. W. T.		Trans. R.E.
12352	Richardson, F. W. T.		2nd-Lieut. 12/13th N.F.; k. 21/3/18.
	Richardson, J. T.		Trans. W. Riding Rgt.; 2nd-Lt. Duke of Wellington's.
13383	Ridding, R.	Corpl.	Died of wounds 10/8/16.
13372	Roberts, A. B.		Transport.
12244	Robinson, F.		2nd-Lt. 9th N.F.
12253	Robson, J. C.		
12313	Rosenvinge, H.		
12160	Ross, D. O.	Sergeant	2nd-Lieut. 6th Cameron Highlanders; killed 9/4/17.

No.	Name.	Rank.	Remarks.
	Russell, S. C.		Left sick in England
12201	Sanderson, L.	Sergeant	
11353	Scott, T. W.		
13888	Scott, W. G.		
12104	Scurr, S.		Killed 8/11/15.
14341	Sharp, R.		Trans.
12306	Shaw, O. R.		15th S. Lancs.
12351	Shimman, H. L.		Lieut. 20th D.L.I.
c.b.s.	Slater, J. A.		Transport.
12166	Smart, F. J.		Lt. Scottish Horse. 2nd-Lieut. 9th Duke of Wellington's.
	Smith, Edgar		Discharged Bovington.
12198	Smith, E. I.	Sergeant	
12236	Snowball, H. W.		D.C.M.
12172	Soulisby, W.		Killed 20/4/17.
12237	Springman, C. B.		2nd-Lieut. M.G.C.
12353	Stephens, L. N.	Corpl.	Killed 6/4/16.
12141	Stephenson, J. R.		Lieut. 11th N.F.
12256	Stephenson, J. W.		Died 7/7/16.
12213	Stephenson, N.		Trans. 9th West Ridings; M.M.
12149	Stevenson, J.	O.R.	
12189	Stevenson, R.	Sergeant	Lt. 9th Y. & L.R.; mentioned in despatches; M.C., and Italian Silver Medal for valour.
13867	Strong, R. B.		
	Stuart, A.		Discharged Bovington.
13373	Sumby, J. J.		
12985	Sumby, T. W.		
c.b.s.	Sutcliffe, H. G.		2nd-Lieut. Tyne- side Irish; killed 1/7/16.

No.	Name.	Rank.	Remarks.
12165	Sutherland, C. S.		Lt. 16th N.F.; M.C.
12137	Sutherland, T.		2nd-Lt. 3rd Gordon Highlanders.
12128	Swindale, A.		2nd-Lieut. R.A.F.
12107	Tarbit, J.		Lieut. K.O.Y.L.I.; mentioned in despatches.
12335	Taylor, B.		
10419	Taylor, G. J.	L/Sergt.	2nd-Lt. 3rd N.F.
12290	Taylor, H. L.		2nd-Lieut. R.A.F.
	Taylor, R. W.		Discharged at Canford.
	Thompson, A.		Left sick in England.
12236	Thompson, A. N.		2nd-Lieut. N.F.
12354	Thompson, C. J.		Captain R.A.F.
12129	Thompson, S. V.		Lieut. N.F., att. D.L.I.
14799	Thorn, H. S.		
12340	Thorne, C. E.	Sergeant	Lieut. 18th N.F.; mentioned in despatches.
18692	Thornton, H. N.		2nd-Lieut. R.A.F.
12345	Thorpe, F.		Killed 7/7/16.
14800	Tickner, S.		
12136	Tinn, H.		
12991	Tolson, W.		
12232	Traves, J. R.		Lieut. R.A.F.
18699	Travill, W.	R.Q.M.S.	R.S.M.; M.C.
	Traynor, J. A.		Trans. W.R. Rgt.
12202	Trevor, H. F.		Died of wounds 5/5/17.
c.b.s.	Trigg, C. T.		Lieut. 21st N.F.
12303	Truttmann, A. V.	L/Cpl.	Killed.
12175	Turnbull, T.		
12288	Turner, A. F.		
11336	Turner, J.		
12214	Turner, R.		Captain R.A.F.
12218	Urwin, F.		Lieut. 12th N.F.
12204	Varty, J.		

No.	NAME.	RANK.	REMARKS.
12211	Veitch, A. E.		Lieut. 4th N.F.
12299	Viner, F. H.		Lt. 12th Liverpool R.; M.C. and Bar, second Bar; killed.
12350	Wastell, W.		2nd-Lt. 12th N.F.; killed 4/10/17.
12117	Walker, G.		
12239	Wallace, P. G.		Trans. 12/13th N.F.
12357	Watson, F. S.		Killed 5/7/16.
12262	Watson, H. H.	Sergeant	
12295	Watson, J. G. D.	Corpl.	
12224	Watson, T.		Trans. 36th N.F.
11323	Watson, W.		Cpl., att. M.G.C.
c.b.s.	Wells, S. C.		Capt. 9th N.F.
c.b.s.	Wedderburn, J. R.		Capt. 24th N.F.
12267	Wild, W. W.	Sergeant	Killed 9/11/16,
12276	Wilkinson, A. E.	"	2nd-Lt. Tank Corps.
10056	Williams, F.	"	C.S.M. 13th N.F.
12302	Wilmshurst, A. P.		Lieut. R.E.
12355	Wilson, A.		
c.b.s.	Wilson, F. G.	Sergeant	Major, 18th N.F.; M.C.
12349	Wilson, R. K.		Lt. 4th N.F., att. R.A.F.
c.b.s.	Wetherall, R. H.		Capt. 14th N.F.; first man to leave Company for commission.
12242	Woods, R.		2nd-Lt. 9th N.F.
12125	Worth, T.		Transport.
7004	Wright, A.	Sgt. (att.)	2nd-Lieut. A.S.C.
11316	Wrightson, D.		Killed 2/10/15.
12138	Young, F. E.		Lieut. 25th N.F.

c.b.s. = commissioned before sailing.

The original members of the Quayside Company were awarded 1 D.S.O., 15 M.C., 3 bars to M.C., and 1 second bar to M.C., 3 D.C.M., 3 M.M., 1 bar to M.M., 3 foreign decorations and 12 "mentions," a total of 42 honours.

Commissions were gained by 118, and 68 of the original members of the Company were killed in action or died of wounds.

OFFICERS.	REMARKS.
Major Lord Howick, Company Commander. Captain Hazelhurst, Second-in-Command.	
Lieutenant P. D. Robinson , No. 5 Platoon Commander.	Killed 7/7/16.
Lieutenant O. E. Wreford-Brown , No. 6 Platoon Commander.	Killed 4/7/16.
Second-Lieutenant G. P. Lefebvre, No. 7 Platoon Commander.	
Second-Lieutenant L. R. Burrows , No. 8 Platoon Commander.	Killed 2/10/15.



SEC.-LIEUT. L. R. BURROWS. [Facing p. 146.]



CAPTAIN P. D. ROBINSON.



CAPTAIN O. E. WREFORD-BROWN.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

QUAYSIDERS IN CAMP¹

It will be remembered that last week the *Evening Mail* was able to record the whereabouts of the "boys" of the Quayside, who were drafted to the south to the number of two hundred and fifty.

They are encamped, with other volunteers, at Bovington, Wool, near Poole, in Dorset.

On Sunday Mr. R. A. Holland, an old Quaysider, who is now in business at the port of Poole, journeyed to the camp to renew acquaintanceship with his old friends. The erstwhile "Scotch Consul" at Newcastle, for that was Mr. Holland's popular title when on Tyneside, seems to have been successful in his reconnoitring expedition, and to have had, so far as military conditions would allow, a fairly good time with the "boys."

Mr. Holland says that he found the camp pitched in a large field situated on the slope of a hill. The tents were placed high up, and the remainder of the field—a large plateau sort of patch—was reserved for drill, while at the bottom of the field were the camp fires and cooking offices.

The country is undulating and fairly well wooded, and the atmosphere breezy and bracing.

Mr. Holland adds: "When I arrived at the grounds, seated on the top of a pile of goods on a tradesman's cart, having thus covered the three miles from Wool Station, I saw the 'boys' at drill. None were yet in uniform.

"A company came past, and was in the act of wheeling, and I noticed that one man—who was hatless and in shirt sleeves—picked me out among the luggage. He raised his arm to attract attention—it was W. Allan (William Dickinson and Co.)—and there followed a signal from another warrior—attired in a sort of white jersey, which made him very conspicuous. That was D. Wright (White and Co.).

"On the breakaway from drill," Mr. Holland adds, "I was immediately surrounded by a crowd of familiar faces, and the time-honoured snuff-box did vigorous duty as of old.

"There were Young, Arkle, Mann, Cameron, Dodsworth, and

¹ By courtesy of *North Mail and Newcastle Chronicle*.

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a host of others. Dodsworth is a sergeant, and was acting as drill instructor.

"Numerous scenes, many comical, and all queer in the light of recollections of Quayside routine, presented themselves in endless array. There was 'Clapham,' with his face covered with lather in an attempt to get his first shave after five days! Being one of the cooks, he could only spare a moment now and again from his work to attend to his personal appearance!"

"The footgear of the Quaysiders was much changed from the days of fancy shoes and ornamental socks. Their shoes now are—well—entirely strangers to blacking or polish, and are mostly covered with mud.

"To see the 'boys' dining! What a treat and what a lesson in accommodating oneself and 'little Mary' to altered circumstances!

"The atmosphere of Gregson's, the Savoy, and of the Collingwood was not there. Fancy seeing Wright, Cameron and Co., for instance, seated on the ground with tin plates on their knees, getting their Sunday dinners by the aid of a knife and fork, proudly acquired at a 'sixpence halfpenny' bazaar when spending an afternoon off at Bournemouth!

"Again to see the 'boys' devouring huge pieces of fat meat, with potatoes that had been boiled in their skins, with evident gusto was a revelation. Another sight was that of Sutcliffe washing plates and pans on a Sunday afternoon. It was novel, and inspiring!"

"The best of spirits prevailed throughout the camp, and good health and physical improvement was marked, though the 'boys' did not 'naturally look quite so dandy' as was their wont when on 'Change.'"

APPENDIX II

A BOMBER'S ACCOUNT¹

AFTER leaving the trenches we tramped kilometre after kilometre blindly following our guide as we had no idea as to our destination, but eventually arrived at a camp situated on the outskirts of Reninghelst, dumped our kits and made for the cookers. In spite of the many skits and jokes at the expense of the army cooks in general, there were many times when one welcomed the sight of them, and this was such an occasion. After a good meal we turned in and had the best and most refreshing sleep we had had for some time.

In good time the following morning we were greeted with —“Come along, boys, get a move on.” The voice was strange to us and we did not feel at all kindly disposed toward the owner. It turned out to be a new bombing officer, Lieutenant Watson, ex-Sergeant-Major from our 2nd Battalion, who took us in hand and proceeded to put us through our drills for the next couple of days.

During the night of the 15th/16th we were suddenly called up and ordered to turn out, and after standing shivering in the bitter cold for a while, received orders to return to huts, which we promptly did, grousing and grumbling at being turned out for what we took to be a test to see how quickly it could be done. However, we had hardly got settled down again when the order to turn out was repeated, and this time the position looked very ominous. We found the machine-gunners loaded up complete and ready for action. We set off and proceeded to the next camp, and here found the Yorks paraded in special fighting order and that the Northumberland Fusilier gunners and bombers were attached to that battalion.

For miles we trudged through slush and mud until met by a guide who left the main column and guided us through still deeper mud to a large barn. Here about fifty men were hard at work detonating bombs as fast as they could, and it was very plain to more experienced bombers that there were several amateurs amongst them. We joined the party and found matters somewhat congested with so many men working in the place. Work had only proceeded a few minutes when there was a blinding flash and the barn seemed full of smoke, and at first we thought a shell had struck the building. As it happened, one of the men had been trying

¹ See page 25.

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to force a detonator into position, which exploded a bomb. Two of the party were killed outright and several more or less seriously wounded. Among the wounded was the ex-bombing-officer, Mr. Haslam, who was superintending operations.

The work was re-started and kept on until dusk. Heavily loaded with the now ready detonated bombs, the party proceeded on their way toward the line. Stopping at Battalion Headquarters on the way, we received the first reliable information as to the reason of the present commotion and sudden activity. We learned of the affair at the "Bluff" and also that we were to take part in a big counter-attack. We arrived at the trenches, and for what seemed hours stood in an old trench, above the ankles in mud, and with rain coming down in torrents, during a terrific bombardment. Our artillery were putting a heavy barrage on the enemy lines, to which they replied, and the noise was terrific. Our orders were to rush and bomb the enemy out of the trench as soon as the artillery fire lifted, and we started, led by the bombing-officer. The Huns retaliated with his bombers, and the fight was fast and furious, but gradually we drove them back until we came to a "stop" built in the trench as a defensive point. Over this stop we rained our bombs. The position was now becoming desperate, the enemy having brought trench mortar batteries on to the height at the point of the Bluff and was raining mortars about us. The fight continued for some time about this stop, and as fast as the men tried to surmount it, casualties occurred. The officer made a desperate effort, but was badly wounded directly he reached the top. The fight continued, but no further advance was possible against the great opposition we met, the trench mortars being the most frightful. On our side only one man was killed outright, but many were wounded, and these, together with the wounded officer, were with great difficulty and danger got back to the dressing-station, and so failed another counter-attack to regain the lost trench.

We later returned to the camp near Reninghelst and awaited the battalion, which was relieved by the 29th Canadians on the 16th and billeted in Dickebusch. The battalion remained in billets until the 20th, when "B" Company went to Voormezeele and the remainder to camp at Reninghelst.

APPENDIX III

A SIDELIGHT ON " THE BLUFF SHOW " ¹

By a Sergeant-Major of a Tyneside Territorial Battery

FOR almost five months in the winter of 1915/16 my battery of four 18-pounder guns was in action just south of the Menin road covering the Hill 60 area.

At an early hour in the morning of 26th February, 1916, we were watching with interest a heavy strafe on our right and " stood by " when we saw the " S.O.S. " go up in that direction.

I was particularly interested as my pals in " B " Company 9th Northumberland Fusiliers were in the line there.

Our Commanding Officer seemed to appreciate the situation, for he had the guns laid on our " Help Right Division " lines, so that when this order came—as it shortly did, the first round was fired within two seconds of its receipt.

Our battery, with one howitzer battery of the division, occupied a position which afforded facilities for helping anyone in need from St. Eloi round to Hooge, so we were ready for the call when it came. The guns opened out at a quick rate, quicker than the " intense " rate laid down in 1918. But we were not left to settle down to a steady job. Fritz—as we called him in those days—took it into his head to spring a mine under the front line on our divisional sector and in our battery zone. This trench was packed with troops " standing to " and watching the strafe on the right, and casualties were heavy—the enemy occupying the crater in the confusion.

Our F.O.O. was in the support line and asked for our guns to fire—but as the important Bluff was being fought for tooth and nail the higher authorities would only allow the Major to take two guns, Nos. 3 and 4, off this task. These two were quickly corrected by the F.O.O., and by means of sweeping fire put up a little barrage of their own just over the far edge of the crater. They were firing a round each at five seconds interval and eating up enormous quantities of shrapnel and high explosive. The Boche Heavy Artillery turned their attention to us, and soon 8-inch, 59, 4·2 and a particularly irritating lot of " pip squeaks " were falling in and round the battery.

The position was well supplied with splinter traverses, and

¹ See page 26.

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casualties were nil, the dug-outs and cubby holes which suffered direct hits being empty as all hands were pressed into the supply of ammunition.

It was a splendid sight to see the men, each with his load of four shells, traversing the couple of hundred yards from the main dump amidst a storm of iron nastiness.

No. 3 gun hadn't been firing long when it suddenly sank several feet, the heavy and continuous firing having caused the water-logged ground to give way under the platform. As firing from this position was impossible, No. 4 gun was ordered to double its rate of fire and to continue the barrage itself. It was a bitter February morning, but the men stripped to the waist and soon were covered with soot and grease. The crew of the now useless No. 3 gun were pressed into the work of carrying and preparing ammunition and in the heavy task of keeping down the accumulation of empty cartridge cases which were piled up like a mountain of brass at the trail end. A splinter from a shell, which landed at the mouth of the pit, carried away the firing gear of No. 4 gun, but the No. 1 whipped on an emergency lanyard and fired the gun in this way.

After half an hour of this "one gun show," the piston rod, overheated, jammed and bent when the gun was at full recoil. This was the limit, but the No. 1 as he stepped out of the pit to report his gun out of action was met with the order to cease firing. The F.O.O. had reported that the barrage had been effective in preventing the reinforcement of the crater garrison and that our infantry had bombed and shot that garrison and then held the crater.

Almost at once the order also came to cease firing on the Bluff as counter-attacks were being discontinued for the present.

The sergeant of No. 4 gun, looking at his hands, bloody and cut to the bone by the lanyard, said proudly: "four hundred and sixty rounds in half an hour! Not so bad for a poor Territorial gun."

I might add that the Bluff whilst in the enemy's possession gave him observation over the approaches to our sector, and we had two F.O.O.'s killed and several telephonists wounded as they went to their daily job at front line observation posts.

APPENDIX IV

From MAJOR LORD HOWICK to C.S.M. TRAVILL¹

July 8th, 1916

DEAR SERGEANT-MAJOR TRAVILL,

You will have heard that Captain Wreford-Brown died from the effects of his wounds on Saturday. I was with him as long as he remained conscious, and he asked me to tell you all that his last thoughts were of "B" Company. He used always to write to me about you all, and of how proud he felt of "B" Company, and how grateful he was to them for all they did for him. He was very happy with you all. His last letter, written just before this show commenced, said: "His only doubt was a misgiving lest his leadership should not do justice to his men. As it is, one cannot but feel that the responsibility is heavy. One's own life is nothing. It is the lives of the men one has come to really love. It is impossible to do otherwise when we have lived so closely together for nearly two years." Let his friends all see this, for it is true all his thoughts and energies were given up to you, and his example should help you all on. He was splendid in hospital, never a complaint or a groan in spite of great pain. He never had a chance of recovering, but he never gave in, and fought to the last. Let me know your losses of the past few days —they were very heavy and include Mr. Robinson. Still we must look forward. Good luck.

(Signed) Howick.

¹ See page 36.



Drawn by Pte. Frank Ray).

"QUAYSIDER PORTRAIT GALLERY."

[Reproduced from "The Quaysider."
[Facing p. 181]

APPENDIX V

" THE QUAYSIDER "

IT was a bold idea, excellent in conception and execution, this of Company Sergeant-Major Alderson to produce a Company Magazine. He lost no time either, for the Souvenir Number was published in October, 1914. Therein the items of a nascent camp are outlined, and, to the historian, they have proved their value. It might reasonably have escaped notice, for instance, that Sergeant Dods-worth got together a strong choir in the company, that the "morning double" found many lacking in wind, that Corporal Clapham could muse over the preparation of stew, or, if need be, burst into verse. How does one, a stranger to the battalion, identify his contribution? When "a silvery twelve-pounder gleams on Coquet side" the answer is clear. But the literary sleuth is at a loss to understand the reference elsewhere to an air-cushion. The genial editor is somehow "pleased to hear you can stand the merciless chaffings of your comrades." Who was it? Who had the audacity?

There is mystery too, though perhaps not so obscure, in another "Answer to Correspondent." I take it verbatim, wonderingly. "Stiffy—Don't be too much alarmed if the tent pole pokes through the top of the tent; better that way than the pole sinking in the ground, or even a tent peg coming out." A pretty picture, yes. "And you can put *that* in your blinking magazine, too!"

Many of the allusions were of transient interest, but some culled from the page "We want to know—" will revive memories.

"The difference between Bovington Camp and Dartmoor prison?"

"If the gale which blew the 'wet' canteen down was not a judgment on the proprietor for the nauseating fluid alleged to be beer?"

"If the gentleman who visited Bournemouth last week found the luxurious life at the Hôtel Metropole boring after the excitement of camp life—and if it is true that there was a perceptible shortage of soap and towels next morning at the above hotel?"

"If a bar in the village is worth two in the camp?"

"If anyone will volunteer to mend Captain H—'s cardigan jacket?"

" Which is the sharp side of the Army knives ? "

" Which G. attracts our boys to the Y.M.C.A., is it games or—? "

" How many of our seats require upholstering ? "

The Quaysider was fortunate in finding an artist, Private Frank W. T. Ray, who could so ably catch the spirit of the company. He adorned the back cover with sketches of the Adjutant, Captain Lord Howick, Captain Westmacott, Company Sergeant-Major Alderson, and Company Quartermaster Sergeant Knott. For the next number, issued November, 1914, he produced an effective frontispiece, and again sketched several prominent "9th" characters.

Again the column " Things we want to know " sheds light upon the conditions at Bovington.

" What was the ulterior motive in the Captain's mind when he read the Army Act previous to the issue of ' uniforms ' ? "

" If the Rugger team is going to be changed to a water-polo team ? "

" What the Netherton Reformatory boys are wearing since we borrowed their ' uniform ' ? "

" If the command is now ' Quick Slide ' instead of ' Quick March ' ? "

" How many members of ' B ' Company have written home for bed linen and the name of the ' blighter ' who asked for an eiderdown quilt ? "

" Whether the Authorities are cognizant of any difference between Northumbrians and Eskimos ? "

In the " Answers to Correspondents," one phrase appears strangely familiar. It is in reply to " Stiffy." Where have I heard it before ? Perhaps some reader may remember the occasion. " No. That never did no good to no one, that never." A haunting refrain to bring back memories !

One number only of *The Quaysider* appeared after this, a Field Service Edition issued in November, 1915. The cover design by Private Frank Ray is a special effort, " Diana of the Chase," based on a statue seen when the battalion was in rest billets. Censorship had made its presence felt, and much of the piquant personality of the two earlier numbers is missing. But in its stead comes the story of heroic deeds, and the falling of brave men. The gay Quaysiders of 1914 have become the warriors of 1915.

Humour is not absent, for " No. 12,119 " compiles a " Soldier's Guide," from which the following memory-revivers are culled :

Bass (Bottled)—" Lost to sight but still to memory dear."
Billet—French for ashpit.

Belgian Cottages—“Here to-day, and gone to-morrow.” Used for many purposes, including artillery practice, road-making, storing bad eggs, vin rouge, etc.

Communication Trench—A maze of mess, mud, and misery.

Flapper—Apparently an almost extinct species. Never seen in France or Flanders.

Grand Advance—A mystery akin to the Millennium.

Headquarters—The centre of the Fatigue industry.

Keating's Powder—(Censored.)

Parade Ground—A dump for weary soldiers and rusty rifles.

Pets—A small subject with a large object. “If your hand tickles you are going to get something. If your back tickles you have got it.”

Rest Camp—Akin to the Paradise of the Mohammedans. “Always in view, but never attained.”

Rifle—A soldier's best friend, but O H—l!

Rumour—The same old fickle jade. “No digging to-night.” “Peace is declared.”

Sleep—Meaning lost in oblivion, probably a survival from Anglo-Saxon times.

Shrapnel Bullets are of three varieties, viz:—

- (1) The nearly did, or the dud.
- (2) The slightly did, or the blighty.
- (3) The did, or the landowner in perpetuity.

Trench Mortar—An instrument used to level the ground where rifles, sandbags, and spare working parties have been left about.

The three issues¹ reflect the greatest credit on the editor, the artists, and the contributors, and form a valuable commentary. It is hoped that the quotation of some of the items will revive many memories; behind some of the personal paragraphs lie many jokes. Some the present writer knows; many he yearns to know. May he be privileged some day to hear them!

¹ Printed by Andrew Reid & Company Limited, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

APPENDIX VI

THE RUBAIYAT OF MAHPALC THE SCRIBE

(*With Apologies to Artemas*)

1. And about the fourth week of the war it came to pass that a great concourse of people gathered themselves together in the streets by the New Castle, and a voice was heard saying, "What came ye out for to see?"

2. And they answered him and said, "Lo! The young men of the Chamber of Commerce have banded themselves together to make war upon the Boches, and this night they set forth unto a far county, even unto Wool."

3. And it was so, and the young men found there a blasted heath, and it was called Bovington, AND OTHER THINGS was it likewise called in their wrath.

4. For behold when they inquired the whereabouts of the nearest caravanserai, it was thousands of cubits distant, and eke was out of bounds.

5. Then arose Charles the son of Alder and spake unto them saying, "The wind bloweth where it listeth. Let us erect our tents, lest a worse thing befall us." But they of lowlier rank answered him and said, "Lo! There are no blinking tents," or words to that effect. And Charles the son of Alder made reply: "Ye say sooth, it is

the Gaudstruth, therefore let us join together and sing."

6. And the young men raised a joyful noise, even unto sundown. And many were the Psalms they sang, even the story of the aged friar did they give utterance to.

7. Even so, they were not all the Psalms of David, for did not Mahpalc the Scribe, he of the ruddy countenance, tell of one with strange headgear and what befell him, and the parable of Dan, Dan, the man of hygiene was also related.

8. And when they had made an end of the singing, they stretched themselves upon the grass, yea, even as the beasts of the field they lay them down to sleep.

9. Then came it to pass that the wise men sat in conclave, and appointed over them a Quarter-master, and behold he was of strange countenance and very fierce.

10. A Captain likewise was set over them, and his face was thoughtful, for he had great possessions.

11. And it came to pass after many days that the young men murmured among themselves, saying, "Why should we eat the husks that the swine eat?

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Let us arise and go to our fathers
that they may kill the calves that
are fatted."

12. Then arose John the son of Hender, and others of like thoughts, and said unto them, "Rather let us write upon a tablet and make a robin that is round." And it was even so and the writing was sent to the Captain aforesaid.

13. And before many hours passed an exceeding great voice was heard crying, "BUGLER," and at his command the trumpet sounded the assembly, for his wrath was exceeding fearful.

14. Then spake the Captain as one having authority, and not as the Scribes, and said unto them: "Thus and thus shall ye do, but thus and thus shall ye not do, or the Manchesters will laugh at

you." And lo it is a saying amongst them unto this day.

15. And there were some who cried: "Lord, make us cooks for we fear to die of so much exercise." And behold he made them cooks, and what with the snow and the sergeant, death had no longer any terrors for them.

16. Now because of the smallness of this papyrus there is no room in which to write of the visits of the young men to the Bourne's Mouth, nor yet of their going into winter quarters where the River Can is forded, but of their sojourn there and their departure unto a far country and how they gave battle to the Boches during many days, is it not written in "The History of the 9th Battalion of the 5th Regiment of Foot."

APPENDIX VII

LIST OF OFFICERS WHO TOOK PART IN THE OPERATIONS, 21ST AND 22ND MARCH, 1918

HEADQUARTERS

Officer Commanding: Lieutenant-Colonel W. A. VIGNOLES, D.S.O.
Second-in-Command: Major D. R. OSBORNE.
Acting-Adjutant: Second-Lieutenant M. W. DRYSDALE.
Signals Officer: Second-Lieutenant W. H. CORNER.
Intelligence Officer: Second-Lieutenant L. FLETCHER, M.M.
Medical Officer: Captain K. D. C. MACRAE, R.A.M.C.

"A" COMPANY

Capt. R. V. L. DALLAS, M.C.
2nd-Lieut. J. L. HOPKINS.
2nd-Lieut. R. H. CRAIG.
2nd-Lieut. C. H. WALKER.

"B" COMPANY

Capt. G. DAVIES.
Lieut. H. S. ROWE.
2nd-Lieut. G. D. YOUNG.
2nd-Lieut. W. BROUGHTON.
2nd-Lieut. V. MASON.
2nd-Lieut. E. R. HOOPER.

"C" COMPANY

Capt. W. S. ALLAN, M.C.
2nd-Lieut. J. A. GODFREY.
2nd-Lieut. W. L. BROWN.
2nd-Lieut. F. L. BROCKLE-HURST.
Lieut. H. G. HADDOCK.
2nd-Lieut. G. M. BORLAND.

"D" COMPANY

Capt. I. G. C. BRADY.
Lieut. E. B. L. PIGGOTT.
2nd-Lieut. H. ANSELL.
2nd-Lieut. F. L. FEATHERSTONE.
2nd-Lieut. A. G. OWEN.

APPENDIX VIII

LIST OF OFFICERS WHO TOOK PART IN THE APRIL, 1918, FIGHTING

HEADQUARTERS

Lieutenant-Colonel W. A. VIGNOLES, D.S.O., Commanding.
Captain M. W. DREYSDALE. Acting Adjutant.
Major J. S. ALLEN, M.C. Second-in-Command. Killed 11th April.
Second-Lieutenant W. H. CORNER. Signals Officer. Wounded 14th April.
Second-Lieutenant L. FLETCHER, M.M. Intelligence Officer. Wounded 14th April.

COMPANIES

Captain R. V. L. DALLAS, M.C. O.C. "A" Company. Killed 13th April.
Captain M. G. PATTEN, M.C. O.C. "B" Company. Killed 14th April.
Acting Captain G. DAVIES. Died of wounds, 14th April.
Captain W. S. ALLAN, M.C. O.C. "C" Company.
Captain I. G. C. BRADY. O.C. "D" Company. Buried by explosion: evacuated 12th April.
Lieutenant H. S. ROWE. Wounded 14th April.
Lieutenant H. S. FITZGERALD. Wounded 16th April.
Second-Lieutenant C. H. WALKER. Wounded 13th April.
Second-Lieutenant W. F. WALKER. Killed 9th April.
Second-Lieutenant G. M. BORLAND. Killed 14th April.
Second-Lieutenant W. BROUGHTON. Wounded 11th April.
Second-Lieutenant G. D. YOUNG. Wounded 14th April.
Lieutenant E. B. L. PIGGOTT. Wounded 18th April.
Second-Lieutenant F. L. FEATHERSTONE. Prisoner of war 9th April.
Second-Lieutenant W. HEARD. Wounded 9th April.
Lieutenant E. G. SMITH. Wounded 14th April.
Second-Lieutenant A. G. OWEN. Evacuated sick 10th April.
Second-Lieutenant C. WILKINSON. Evacuated sick 14th April.
Second-Lieutenant J. L. BAKER.

The following note is attached to the War Diary: "Officers, W.O.'s, N.C.O.'s and men who distinguished themselves during

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the fighting were very numerous, but the following, out of those surviving, did exceptionally well":—

Lieut. H. S. ROWE.	2nd-Lieut. J. L. BAKER.
Capt. I. G. C. BRADY.	A/Capt. W. S. ALLAN, M.C.
2nd-Lieut. L. FLETCHER, M.M.	Capt. K. D. C. MACRAE,
2nd-Lieut. W. H. CORNER.	R.A.M.C.
Lieut. E. B. L. PIGGOTT.	Capt. O. B. PALMER.
	Lieut. J. L. YOUNG.
18700 Company Sergeant-Major (A/R.S.M.) A. RICHARDSON, M.M.	
41172 Sergeant (A/C.S.M.) R. HARDMAN, D.C.M.	
15939 Lance-Corporal J. W. DAWSON.	
11277 Lance-Corporal E. W. BELL.	
17382 Private R. J. HOOD.	
22736 Sergeant A. J. OXLEE.	
48545 Private J. TAYLOR.	
46727 Sergeant W. LUMLEY.	
44589 Private J. HILL.	
41223 Corporal A. SCHOFIELD.	
29798 Private F. PEARSON.	
13/5947 Private W. READY.	
12970 Sergeant J. E. STOKER.	

Attached

Casualties during the month were: 50 killed, 249 wounded, 13 died of wounds, 53 missing, 20 gassed.

APPENDIX IX¹

WAR HONOURS

THE list of honours awarded to the Northumberland Fusiliers for their part in the Great War has now, after two years' searching and verification of records and war diaries, received the approval of His Majesty the King and will be published in Army Orders at an early date.

The list, as given below, will in future appear on the page allotted to the regiment in the Army List, and in addition the honours shown in large type have been sanctioned by His Majesty to be borne on the colours of each battalion :—

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. THE GREAT WAR—
52 BATTALIONS. | 31. Passchendaele.
32. Cambrai, 1917.
33. St. Quentin.
34. Bapaume, 1918.
35. Rosières.
36. Lys.
37. Estaires.
38. Hazebrouck.
39. Bailleul.
40. Kemmel.
41. Scherpenberg.
42. Drocourt-Queant.
43. Hindenburg Line.
44. Epéhy.
45. Canal du Nord.
46. Beaurevoir.
47. Courtrai.
48. SELLÉ.
49. Valenciennes.
50. Sambre.
51. France and Flanders,
1914-18.
52. PIAVE.
53. Vittorie Veneto.
54. Italy, 1917-18.
55. STRUMA.
56. Macedonia, 1915-18.
57. SUVLA.
58. Landing at Suvla.
58. Scimitar Hill.
60. Gallipoli, 1915.
61. Egypt, 1916-17. |
| 2. MONS.
3. Le Cateau.
4. Retreat from Mons.
5. MARNE, 1914.
6. Aisne, 1914, '18.
7. La Bassée, 1914.
8. Messines, 1914, '17, '18.
9. YPRES, 1914, '15, '17,
'18.
10. Gravenstafel.
11. ST. JULIEN.
12. Frezenburg.
13. Bellewaarde.
14. Loos.
15. SOMME, 1916, '18.
16. Albert, 1916, 1918.
17. Bazentin.
18. Delville Wood.
19. Flers-Courcelette.
20. Morval.
21. Thiepval.
22. Le Transloy.
23. Ancre, 1916.
24. Arras, 1917, '18.
25. SCARPE, 1917, '18.
26. Alleux.
27. Pilckem.
28. Langemarck, 1917.
29. Menin Road.
30. Broodseinde. | |

¹ By courtesy of *Newcastle Journal*.

168 9th (Service) Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers

This official recognition of the splendid part played by the county regiment from 1914 to 1918 will give the greatest satisfaction to all Northumbrians.

The first honour on the list has perhaps the greatest significance—"The Great War: 52 battalions"—a tribute to the district which gave the largest contribution to the armed forces of the Crown of any providing a purely local unit. Regular, Territorial, and new Army battalions all helped to compile this wonderful record. The professional soldier shares with his amateur brother the honour of this recognition of their gallantry on many a common field.

The Northumberland Fusiliers were represented during every phase and in almost every theatre during the War. The Regular battalions of The Fifth figured, of course, with the original Expeditionary Force, and the number of battalions steadily increased until the record number of fifty-two was reached. No fewer than twenty-six of these battalions fought on the Western front; the 10th and 11th Service Battalions took part in the operations against the Austrians in Italy; the 8th Battalion made history during the ill-fated Gallipoli campaign; the 2nd Battalion fought in Macedonia and Serbia; whilst others served in Egypt and India.

To read the list of honours now awarded to the regiment is to read in tabloid form the history of the War. To qualify for any particular honour, the unit concerned had to have at least half its effective strength engaged inside the very definite geographical limits laid down by the War Office Battle Honours Committee. A representative Regimental Committee, under the Colonel of the regiment, Major-General Sir P. Wilkinson, K.C.M.G., C.B., decided which honours should be claimed on behalf of the regiment. This committee also decided which ten honours (the limit allowed) would best illustrate the part played by the regiment as a whole throughout the War. These ten are for emblazonment on the colours.

The result is a record of honour to Northumberland and the Northumberland Fusiliers that will live for ever—a list that will bring back to our memories the names of those thousands of our friends who, hating war, went out to fight and returned no more; a list that will bring some consolation to the many in our midst who were broken in the War, but who will read these honours to-day, and in justifiable pride may say, "I was there."

APPENDIX X

THE NORTHUMBERLAND FUSILIERS: SCHEDULE SHOWING BATTALIONS WHICH TOOK PART IN BATTLES FOR WHICH "BATTLE HONOURS" HAVE BEEN AWARDED TO THE REGIMENT. ("THEATRE OF WAR" HONOURS EXCLUDED.)

BATTLES	BATTALIONS
Mons	1st Battalion.
Le Cateau	1st Battalion.
Retreat from Mons	1st Battalion.
Marne, 1914.	1st Battalion.
Aisne, 1914	1st Battalion.
Aisne, 1918	4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 12th, and 13th Battalions.
La Bassée, 1914	1st Battalion.
Messines, 1914	1st Battalion.
Messines, 1917	8th, 10th, 11th, and 16th Battalions.
Messines, 1918	12th, 13th, 18th, and 25th Battalions.
Ypres, 1914	1st Battalion.
Ypres, 1915	1st, 2nd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, and 9th Battalions.
Ypres, 1917	1st, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 17th, 18th, 19th and 26th Battalions.
Ypres, 1918	19th Battalion.
Gravenstafel	2nd Battalion.
St. Julien	2nd, 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th Battalions.
Frezenberg	2nd, 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th Battalions.
Bellewaarde	1st, 2nd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, and 9th Battalions.
Loos	1st, 2nd, 9th, 12th, 13th, and 14th Battalions.
Somme, 1916.	1st, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th, 21st, 22nd, 23rd, 24th, 25th, 26th, and 27th Battalions.
Somme, 1918.	Not recorded.
Albert, 1916	9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th, 21st, 22nd, 23rd, 24th, 25th, 26th, and 27th Battalions.
Albert, 1918	14th and 36th Battalions.
Bazentin	1st, 12th, 13th, 14th, 16th, 17th, and 19th Battalions.
Delville Wood	9th Battalion.
Flers-Courcelette	4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 12th, 13th, 18th and 25th Battalions.

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Morval	4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th, and 14th Battalions.
Thiepval	8th Battalion.
Le Transloy	4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th Battalions.
Ancre, 1916	1st, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, and 16th Battalions.
Arras, 1917	1st, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 18th, 20th, 21st, 22nd, 23rd, 25th, 26th, and 27th Battalions.
Arras, 1918	1st and 17th Battalions.
Scarpe, 1917.	1st, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 9th, 14th, 18th, 20th, 22nd, 25th, and 26th Battalions.
Scarpe, 1918.	17th Battalion.
Alleux	18th, 20th, 21st, 22nd, 23rd, and 25th Battalions.
Pilckem.	17th and 18th Battalions.
Langemarck, 1917	8th and 18th Battalions.
Menin Road	10th and 11th Battalions.
Broodseinde	12th and 13th Battalions.
Passchendaele	4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 9th, 14th, 17th, 19th, and 26th Battalions.
Cambrai, 1917	1st and 18th Battalions.
St. Quentin	4th, 5th, 6th, 9th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 18th, 22nd, and 25th Battalions.
Bapaume, 1918	14th and 19th Battalions.
Rosières	4th, 5th, and 6th Battalions.
Lys	1st, 4th, 5th, 6th, 9th, 14th, 17th, 18th, 23rd, 24th, and 25th Battalions.
Estaires.	4th, 5th, 6th, 9th, 18th, 22nd, 23rd, and 25th Battalions.
Hazebrouck	4th, 5th, 6th, 9th, and 17th Battalions.
Bailleul.	9th, 18th, and 22nd Battalions.
Kemmel.	9th and 24th Battalions.
Scherpenberg.	9th Battalion.
Drocourt-Queant	1st and 17th Battalions.
Hindenburg Line	8th and 17th Battalions.
Epéhy	12th, 13th, and 14th Battalions.
Canal du Nord	1st, 8th, 14th, and 17th Battalions.
Beaurevoir	2nd Battalion.
Courtrai	19th Battalion.
Selle	1st, 2nd, 9th, 12th, and 13th Battalions.
Valenciennes.	9th and 17th Battalions.
Sambre	2nd, 12th, 13th, and 14th Battalions.
Piave	10th and 11th Battalions.
Vittorio Veneto	10th and 11th Battalions.
Struma	2nd Battalion.
Suvla	8th Battalion.
Landing at Suvla	8th Battalion.
Scimitar Hill.	8th Battalion.
Egypt	8th Battalion.

APPENDIX XI
BIBLIOGRAPHY
(Compiled by Alfred Brewis)

BATTALION.	TITLE.	AUTHOR.	WHERE PUBLISHED.	YEAR.
1st Batt. (3rd Div. 9th Bde.)	The St. George's Gazette, August, 1914 <i>et seq.</i> (History in preparation)			
2nd Batt. (28th Div. 84th Bde.)	Gazette, April, 1915 <i>et seq.</i> (History in preparation)			
3rd Batt.	Gazette, September, 1914 <i>et seq.</i>			
4th Batt. (50th Div. 149th Bde.)	Diary of an Officer with the 4th Battalion in Flanders When the Lantern of Hope Burned Low	Lieut. W. J. Bunbury Rev. R. Wilfred Callin, C.F.	Hexham Hexham	1915 1919

BATTALION.	TITLE.	AUTHOR.	WHERE PUBLISHED.	YEAR.
	The Salient, the Somme and Arras Gazette, October, 1914 <i>et seq.</i>	" Bumble Bee "	London	1917
5th Batt. (50th Div. 149th Bde.)	Gazette, October, 1914 <i>et seq.</i>			
6th Batt. (50th Div. 149th Bde.)	Gazette, September, 1914 <i>et seq.</i> (History in preparation)			
7th Batt. (50th Div. 149th Bde.; also 42nd Div.)	My First Week in Flanders Q.6.A. and Other Places The 42nd (East Lancashire) Division	Captain the Hon. W. Watson Armstrong Francis Buckley Frederick P. Gibbon	London London London	1916 1920 1920

War History of the Seventh Gazette, October, 1914 <i>et seq.</i>	Captain F. Buckley	Newcastle	1926
8th Batt. (11th Div. 34th Bde.)	The Dardanelles Campaign Gazette, September, 1914	Henry W. Nevinson	London
9th Batt. (17th Div. 52nd Bde.; also 34th & 61st Divs.)	Ypres to Loos. The Quaysider The History of the Northumber- land Yeomanry, 1819-1923 The 34th Division Gazette, September, 1914 <i>et seq.</i> Historical Records of the 9th (Service) Battalion	Howard Pease Lieut.-Col. John Shakespear Captain C. H. Cooke	London London Newcastle
10th Batt. (23rd Div. 69th Bde.)	The 23rd Division, 1914-1919 Gazette, October, 1914 <i>et seq.</i>	Lieut.-Col. H. R. Sandilands	Edinburgh

BATTALION.	TITLE.	AUTHOR.	WHERE PUBLISHED.	YEAR.
11th Batt. (23rd Div. 69th Bde.)	The 23rd Division, 1914-1919 Gazette, October, 1914 <i>et seq.</i>	Lieut.-Col. Sandilands	Edinburgh	1925
12th Batt. (21st Div. 62nd Bde.)	Gazette, October, 1914 <i>et seq.</i>			
13th Batt. (21st Div. 62nd Bde.)	Gazette, November, 1914 <i>et seq.</i>			
14th Batt. (21st Div.)	Gazette, November, 1914 <i>et seq.</i>			

15th Batt.

Standing Orders, 15th Battalion
Gazette, January, 1915 *et seq.*

Darlington

1914

16th Batt. (32nd Div. 96th Bde.)	The Commercials The Growler Jottings by a Gunner and Chaplain The Lancashire Fusiliers Historical Records of the 16th Battalion, 1914-1918 A Record of the 17th Battalion, 1914-1919 <i>Gazette, December, 1914 et seq.</i>
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16th Batt. (32nd Div. 96th Bde.)	Alfred Brewis John A. Boullier Sir Montague Barlow Captain C. H. Cooke Lieut.-Col. Shakespeare
	Newcastle
	London
	Manchester
	Newcastle
	Newcastle
	1915

17th Batt. (32nd Div.)	Formation and Training N.E. Railway Magazine <i>Gazette, May, 1916 et seq.</i> A Record of the 17th and 32nd Service Battalions, 1914-1919
	York
	1915
	Lieut.-Col. Shakespeare. (Editor: Major Cole)
	Newcastle
	1926

BATTALION.	TITLE.	AUTHOR.	WHERE PUBLISHED.	YEAR.
18th Batt. (34th Div.)	Historical Records of the 18th Battalion The 34th Division St. George's Gazette, March, 1916 <i>et seq.</i>	Lieut.-Col. John Shakespear Lieut.-Col. John Shakespear	Newcastle London	1920 1921
19th Batt. (35th Div.)	Historical Records of the 19th Battalion Gazette, February, 1916 <i>et seq.</i> History of the 35th Division	Captain C. H. Cooke Lieut.-Col. H. M. Davson	Newcastle London	1920 1926

20th Batt.	The Tyneside Scottish Brigade	J. R. Hall	Newcastle	
21st Batt. (34th Div. 102nd Bde.)	The Story of the Tyneside Scottish	Brigadier-General Trevor Ternan	Newcastle	1919
22nd Batt. (34th Div. 102nd Bde.)	The 34th Division	Lieut.-Col. John Shakespear	London	1921
23rd Batt. (34th Div. 102nd Bde.)	The Tyneside Irish Brigade	Joseph Keating Lieut.-Col. John Shakespear	London London	1917 1921

BATTALION.	TITLE.	AUTHOR.	WHERE PUBLISHED	YEAR.
25th Batt. (34th Div. 103rd Bde.)	The 34th Division	Lieut.-Col. John Shakespeare	London	1921
26th Batt. (34th Div. 103rd Bde.)	Gazette, February, 1916			
27th Batt. (34th Div. 103rd Bde.)	The Tyneside Irish Brigade	Joseph Keating	London	1917
28th Batt.	See Records of 17th and 19th Battalions; Gazette, March, 1916			

29th Batt.

30th Batt.

31st Batt.

"The Lying Load."
29th February, 1916

32nd Batt.

See Record of 17th Battalion

33rd Batt.

BATTALION.	TITLE.	AUTHOR.	WHERE PUBLISHED	YEAR.
34th Batt.				
35th Batt.	Gazette, 29th November, 1919			

APPENDIX XII
**NEWCASTLE AND GATESHEAD INCORPORATED
 CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

President: The Right Hon. **LORD JOICEY, D.L., D.C.L., J.P.**
HERBERT SHAW, D.L., J.P., Secretary, Chamber of Commerce.

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GEORGE RENWICK, D.L., J.P., M.P., Vice-Chairman.

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F. CARRICK , Chairman, Comforts Committee.		
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T. M. CLAGUE.	MAJOR GEORGE PARKINSON.
F. CLARK.	CAPTAIN C. E. PUMPHREY, M.C.
[THE LATE W. CROSSING]	
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COL. H. A. ERSKINE, C.B.E.,	LIEUT.-COL. W. H. RITSON,
C.B., C.M.G., T.D.	C.M.G., V.D.
EVANS FAWCUS.	RICHARD ROBSON.
A. J. FENWICK.	A. SCHOLEFIELD, J.P.
GERALD FRANCE, M.P.	CLARENCE SMITH.
L. GEIPEL.	LIEUT.-COL. R. STEPHENSON,
R. M. GLOVER, J.P.	C.B.E., D.S.O.
W. R. HEATLEY, O.B.E.	R. M. SUTTON.
J. S. HINDLEY.	MAJOR J. TALBOT.
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CHARLES IRWIN, J.P.	T. E. WEBB.
Committee Secretary: T. M. McBRYDE.	
Hon. Secretary (1919): CAPTAIN R. H. WORTHINGTON, M.C.	

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„ F. CARRICK.	-	„ J. T. LUNN.
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„ ROBERT HARRISON.	-	„ W. H. RITSON.

MISS MARY ADAM, Hon. Secretary.

THE WORK OF THE MILITARY COMMITTEE

The 250 men of "B" Company having departed for Wool, authority to raise a complete battalion was obtained from the War Office. This was the 16th (Service) Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers. Training, under Lieutenant-Colonel W. H. Ritson, C.M.G., began in the grounds of the Royal Grammar School, and continued at Alnwick, Cramlington and Salisbury Plain. On 22nd November, 1915, the battalion, under Colonel Ritson, went to France as part of the 96th Brigade, 32nd Division.

The 16th Battalion having been successfully raised, the Chamber pressed for authority to raise a second battalion, but it was not until 14th October that the request was granted, the authority from the War Office in this case being addressed, along with those for the first battalions of the Tyneside Scottish and Irish, to the Lord Mayor as nominal raiser. Recruiting commenced on 16th October, 1914, and was completed on 4th November. This was the 18th (Service) Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers, originally known as the Tyneside Battalion and afterwards as the 1st Tyneside Pioneers. It had its first headquarters at the Cricket Ground, Newcastle, and after training at Rothbury, Cramlington and Salisbury Plain, went under command of Lieutenant-Colonel J. Shakespear, C.I.E., D.S.O. (now C.M.G.), to France 7th January, 1916, as the Pioneer Battalion of the 34th Division. The record of this battalion is the first volume published of this series.

On the 16th November, 1914, the Chamber obtained War Office authority to raise a third battalion, and the numbers were completed on 1st December. This was the 19th (Service) Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers (2nd Tyneside Pioneers). This battalion, after training at Morpeth, Cramlington, Masham, and Salisbury Plain, proceeded to France under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel (now Colonel) F. W. Daniell, D.S.O., on 28th January, 1916. Their record, as Pioneer Battalion to the 35th Division, is the second volume published in this series.

The Military Committee also recruited Dépôt Companies for each of the three battalions; the reserves of the 18th and 19th Battalions trained at Cramlington and Harrogate under Lieutenant-Colonel L. E. Fawcett, and formed the 28th (Reserve) Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers, while those of the 16th Battalion trained at Cramlington and Catterick Bridge and formed the 31st (Reserve) Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers.

The troops raised by the Chamber of Commerce thus numbered in all about 5,550.

The Military Committee (Chairman, Major R. Temperley; Vice-

Chairman, Mr. George Renwick) carried through the prolonged and arduous work of raising, organizing and providing for the battalions by means of a series of Sub-Committees, as follows:

The Recruiting Committee (Chairman, Major Robert Temperley), whose success was largely due to the energy of Mr. George Renwick and to the management of the Chamber's Recruiting Officers by Mr. Lionel Woods and Mr. Walter Armstrong.

The Clothing Committee (Chairman, Mr. Fred B. Fenwick), which in circumstances of great pressure and difficulty, owing to the phenomenal shortage of supplies, carried through or advised on the purchase of clothing, equipment, etc., amounting to some £50,000, which sum was in due course almost entirely recovered from the War Office.

The Billeting and Camp Committee (Chairman, Major Robert Temperley).—This Committee, of which Mr. Richard Robson, Mr. Robert Eeles and Mr. A. M. Sutherland were very active members, arranged the headquarters for the three battalions while stationed in Newcastle, the hutments at Alnwick for the 16th and billeting schemes for the 18th at Rothbury, and the 19th at Morpeth, including the installation of cooking and sanitary requirements, baths, rifle-ranges, etc.

The Dependents Committee.—As soon as recruiting commenced this Committee was formed "To arrange that all dependents of soldiers in the battalions shall be properly looked after during the breadwinner's absence on military service," and the great success of its operations is due to its original Chairman, Mr. W. R. Heatley, to his successors Mr. J. S. Hindley and Mr. H. E. Anderson, and to the Secretary, Mr. T. M. McBryde.

The assistance given has in the main been to supplement the Army Separation Allowance where such assistance was considered necessary. At one time there were as many as fifteen hundred cases on the books, involving a weekly expenditure of about £240 or over £12,000 a year. The total expenditure of this Committee has been about £38,000, this sum being provided out of the Guarantee Funds subscribed by the members of the Chamber of Commerce and others.

The payments to dependents have been made through the post, except in large areas where the grants were personally distributed by lady voluntary workers. The Committee have kept in the closest possible touch with all the recipients of grants and have been able to advise the dependents on many points of difficulty. The Committee have been much gratified by the very numerous letters which have been received from both the dependents and soldiers expressing appreciation for the help received.

An important feature of this Committee's work has been their efforts to obtain for dependents (where known to the Committee) the maximum possible allowance from State Funds, and it may be mentioned that similar assistance has been given to dependents of men in other battalions than those raised by the Chamber of Commerce.

With the demobilization of the three battalions this work has

naturally diminished, although in many cases the Committee continue to give relief to widows and dependents of men who have fallen in action where circumstances are especially hard.

The Finance Committee (Chairman, Mr. D. Stephens; Joint Hon. Treasurers, Mr. H. E. Anderson and Mr. A. M. Sutherland).—Under the Chairmanship originally of the late Mr. Charles Henderson, the first Hon. Treasurer, this Committee acted as Paymaster on behalf of the Government for the clothing, equipment, stores, and other provisions for these troops until taken over by the War Office, and has also been responsible for the judicious disposal of the "Guarantee Funds" raised by the Chamber (largely through the instrumentality of Mr. R. M. Glover and other Committee men), by voluntary subscriptions, which amounted to about £44,653.¹

The Comforts Committee (Chairman, Mr. F. Carrick; Hon. Treasurer, Mr. Alfred Brewis; Hon. Secretary, Mr. Herbert Shaw) was formed in October, 1915, to send out to the men at the Front

¹ The contracts for clothing, equipment, stores, etc., were made by the Sub-Committees concerned on the authority of the Military Committee, which, on behalf of the Chamber, guaranteed any excess which might ultimately not be authorized by the War Office. The monies for these expenditures were in due course drawn from the Army Paymaster and all items originally disallowed were eventually approved by the War Office, and where these had been paid by the Committee out of the "Guarantee Funds" the amount was refunded from Army Funds.

Thus though the Chamber incurred a great initial financial responsibility during the period of formation of the battalions, its ultimate unrecovered expenditure in respect of this period only amounted to about £5,294, which had been expended on outlay which may be legitimately regarded as outside the scope of War Office responsibility, viz.—Officers' Kits, Gifts to Officers and Men, Travelling Expenses for Men, Extra Accommodation at Training Headquarters, Clothing and Equipment Extras, Extra Expenses of Recruiting, Salaries, Printing, Stationery, Postages, and Sundries. The balance (about £38,000) of the total "Guarantee Fund" (about £44,000) thus became applicable for grants to dependents, etc. See under the "Dependents Committee."

The 16th Battalion kept its own accounts; the battalion only once approached the Committee to get War Office authority for unauthorized expenditure (£380 for extra undervests) which was obtained.

The 18th Battalion kept its own accounts until April, 1915, when, as large sums had been disallowed by the Paymaster, they were handed over to the Committee, which ultimately received approval of this previously disallowed expenditure. On this battalion's account the Committee has drawn from Army Funds £11,192.

The 19th Battalion accounts were kept by the Committee throughout the period of formation, the total sum received from Army Funds being £17,139.

The funds administered by the Comforts, the Entertainments and the Reception and Histories Committees were raised by special subscription and were independent of the "Guarantee Funds."

The principal funds raised and administered by the Military Committee and its Sub-Committees may therefore be summarized as follows:

The "Guarantee Funds"—

	£
Formation Expenses unrecoverable from Government	5,294
Grants to Dependents and Soldiers	39,359
Comforts Fund	3,038
Entertainment Fund	790
Reception and Histories Fund	about 2,000
Total	£50,481

Sundry minor subscriptions raised for purposes not here recorded will bring the aggregate up to about £51,000

comforts as required and a regular supply of magazines and newspapers, etc. These, and the special gifts sent out at Christmas and St. George's Day, have been much appreciated by the men. During four years the Ladies' Working Party (Miss Mary Adam, Hon. Secretary), with the assistance of numerous workers, including relatives of all ranks of the battalions, were able to send out 37,426 pairs of hand-knitted socks, in addition to other useful woollen articles. The sum of £1,860 was spent in the purchase of wool and £1,178 in the purchase of goods and in cash grants to the three battalions and to the "Quayside" Company of the 9th Northumberland Fusiliers. These sums were provided by special subscriptions.

The Entertainments Committee (Chairman, Mr. Robt. Eeles; Hon. Secretary, Mr. T. M. McBryde) organized during the summer months (1915 to 1919) a series of garden parties and river trips (the latter on the launch lent by the Tyne Improvement Commission) for the wounded soldiers stationed at the local military hospitals.

To enable this scheme to be successfully carried out a sum of £790 was collected. The Committee have every reason to believe that both the greatest possible enjoyment and the highest beneficial effects were derived by the soldiers from these outings. They were conveyed to the garden parties in motor-cars provided by local ladies and gentlemen.

During the winter months, through the courtesy of the management and with the gratuitous assistance of the artistes of the local theatres, weekly indoor entertainments were provided at the Armstrong College and the Northumberland War Hospitals.

The total number of soldiers for whom entertainment was arranged is about thirty-one thousand.

The Reception Committee (Chairman, Mr. Robert Eeles; Hon. Secretary, Captain Worthington).—This Committee was founded in 1919 to make arrangements for entertaining in a suitable manner the returned Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers and Men of the units raised by the Chamber. Through the instrumentality of Lieutenant-Colonel R. Stephenson, Major Bryant and Mr. H. E. Anderson, a substantial sum has been collected from the members of the Chamber for this object and that of the Histories Committee.

The Histories Committee (Chairman, Mr. Alfred Brewis) undertook the arrangements for the publication of the Histories of the three battalions raised by the Chamber and of the "Quayside" Company of the 9th Northumberland Fusiliers and the presentation of these volumes to the returned men and the next-of-kin of those who have fallen. These Histories are being compiled under the general editorship of the Chairman of this Committee.

Secretarial.—On obtaining a post in a Government Department in London, Mr. McBryde resigned his position of Committee Secretary and also the honorary secretaryships of the three Comrades' Leagues, founded in connection with each battalion. Thereupon Captain R. H. Worthington, M.C., late Adjutant of the 16th

186 9th (Service) Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers

Battalion, accepted the appointment of Honorary Secretary for the purpose of the winding up of the varied activities of the Committee.

AUTHOR'S NOTES:—(1) The original draft has been used in the compilation of this Appendix. Many titles and other honours have since been deservedly gained by members of the Military Committee.

(2) Apart from the work of the Military Committee, mention must be made of the generosity of Sir James Knott to dependents of the fallen of the 9th Battalion. In memory of his two sons, Major James Leadbitter Knott, D.S.O., and Captain Henry Basil Knott, who both made the great sacrifice, the Knott Fund was instituted. Hundreds of people bear testimony to this further example of the beneficent generosity of Sir James.

POSTSCRIPT

IN writing this note I am, in fact, writing a postscript to the whole series of Histories of the Battalions raised by the Newcastle Chamber of Commerce, for this book, though numbered as the first, is the last to be produced.

Captain Cooke, who is responsible for three of the four volumes, has done his work well in each case, and, in this last book, has done better than ever, while the work of Mr. Alfred Brewis is as painstaking as ever. The thanks of all Fusiliers are due to both of them, and to Colonel Shakespear, for the labour they have put into the work, which has resulted in a series of Records worthy of the Battalions which they commemorate.

Our thanks are also due to the Chamber of Commerce, and to those associated with them, who nursed the Battalions in the early days of the war, helped those who served in them, and have now found the money for these Histories.

Lastly, let me try to say a word about my gallant comrades of the 9th Battalion. But how difficult it is to find words to match the deeds of these men. If, in the future, our descendants want to know something of the spirit in which the men of the 9th bore their part when without superior direction—and it was left to companies, platoons, and sections to fight it out—let them turn to Captain Cooke's description of the fight at Crucifix Corner, exactly ten years ago to-day. If their blood is not stirred by that story, then they will be poor creatures indeed.

As long as life lasts I shall remember those who served with me, each one, officer or private, doing his particular job with a singleness of purpose and a devotion to duty which made the 9th what it was, a magnificent fighting unit among the many fine ones that carried the badge of the Fifth Foot.

W. A. VIGNOLES,
Lieut.-Colonel.

LONDON,

14th April, 1928.

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